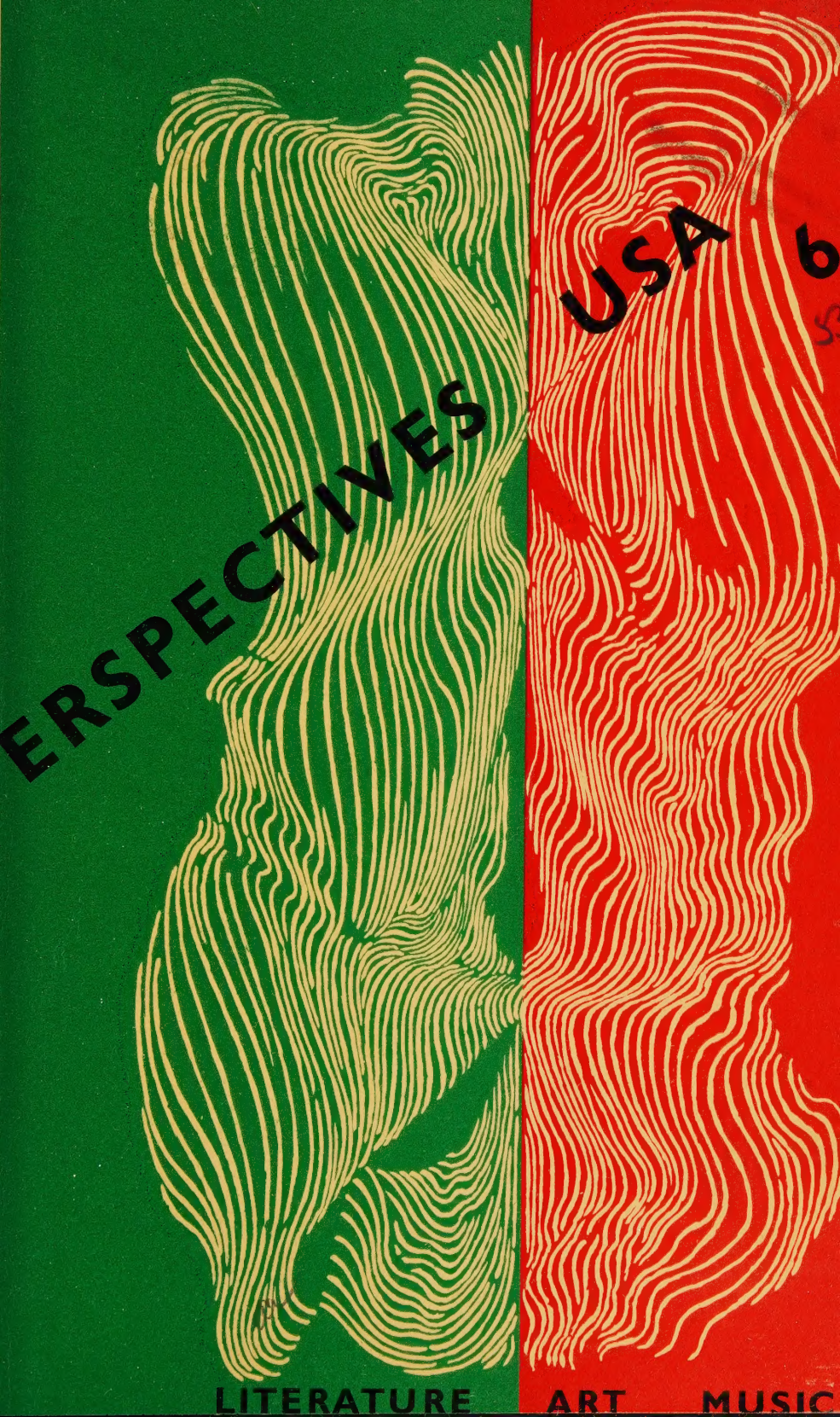
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*Allen Tate*

# TO WHOM IS THE POET RESPONSIBLE?[1]

And for what? The part of the question that I have used as the title has been widely asked in our generation. I have seldom heard anybody ask the second part: *For what*? I shall have to assume, without elucidating it, a certain moral attitude towards the idea of responsibility which is perhaps as little popular in our time as the accused poetry that has given rise to the controversy. Thus I take it for granted that nobody can be held generally responsible, for if our duties are not specific they do not exist. It was, I think, the failure to say what the modern poet was responsible *for* that made it easy to conclude, from the attacks ten years ago by Mr. MacLeish and Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, that in some grandiose sense the poet should be held responsible to society for everything that nobody else was paying any attention to. The poet was saddled with a total responsibility for the moral, political, and social well-being; it was pretty clearly indicated that had he behaved differently at some indefinite time in the near or remote past the international political order itself would not have been in jeopardy, and we should not perhaps be at

[1] A brief version of this paper was read at Bennington College on April 16, 1950; present text, at a symposium of the Committee for Cultural Freedom, May 10, 1951.

international loggerheads today. We should not have had the Second World War, perhaps not even the first.

The historic political suspicion of poetry is one thing; but the attacks that I have alluded to were by men of letters, one of them a poet—and this is another thing altogether. I do not know to what extent the Marxist atmosphere of the 'thirties influenced the attacks. In trying to get to the bottom of them one may dismiss too quickly the Communist party line as a perversion of the original Platonic rejection of poetry which holds that the arts of sensible imitation are a menace to the political order. One must dismiss it respectfully, because it contains a fundamental if one-eyed truth: that is to say, from Plato on there is in this tradition of thought the recognition that however useful poetry may be as a civilizing virtue, it should not be allowed to govern the sensibility of persons who run the state. One may scarcely believe that Sophocles *as poet* was appointed *strategos* in the Samian war, even though that honorific office followed upon the great success of the *Antigone* in the Dionysia of 440 B.C. What I am getting at here is that, were we confronted with an unreal choice, it would be better to suppress poetry than to misuse it, to expect of it an order of action that it cannot provide. (Stalinist Russia seems to do both: it suppresses poetry and supports party verse.) In any literary history that I have read there is no record of a poet receiving and exercising competently high political authority. Milton wrote Cromwell's Latin correspondence, and tracts of his own; but he was never given power; and likewise his successor, Andrew Marvell. We have read some of Shelley's more heroic assertions, in "The Defense of Poetry," into the past, where we substitute what Shelley said ought to have been for what was. The claim that poets are "unacknowledged legislators" is beyond dispute, if we understand that as legislators they should remain unacknowledged and not be given the direction of the state. This limit being set, we are ready to understand what Shelley had really to say—which is the true perception that there is always a reciprocal relation between life and art, at that point at which life imitates art.

If poetry makes us more conscious of the complexity and meaning of our experience, it may have an eventual effect upon action,

even political action. The recognition of this truth is not an achievement of our own age; it is very old. Our contribution to it I take to be a deviation from its full meaning, an exaggeration and a loss of insight. Because poetry may influence politics we conclude that poetry is merely politics, or a kind of addlepated politics, and thus not good for anything. Why this has come about there is not time to say here, even if I knew. One may point out some of the ways in which it has affected our general views, and hence see how it works in us.

How does it happen that literary men themselves blame the poets first when society goes wrong? The argument we heard ten years ago runs somewhat as follows: The rise of Hitlerism (we were not then looking too narrowly at Stalinism) reflects the failure of our age to defend the principles of social and political democracy, a failure resulting from the apathy of responsible classes of society, those persons who have charge of the means of public influence that was formerly called language (but is now called "communications"). These persons are the writers, more particularly the poets or "makers," whose special charge is the purity of language and who represent the class of writers presumably at its highest. The makers, early in the nineteenth century, retired to a private world of their own invention, where they cultivated certain delusions—for example, their superiority to practical life, the belief in the autonomy of poetry, and the worship of the past. Some of them, like Baudelaire, actively disliked democracy. Their legacy to our tortured age turned out to be at once the wide diffusion and the intensification of these beliefs, with the result that we became politically impotent, and totalitarianism went unchecked.

This argument is impressive and we cannot wholly dismiss it; for directed somewhat differently it points to a true state of affairs: there was a moral and political apathy in the Western countries, and there was no decisive stand against Nazism until it was too late to prevent war. Did the men of letters, the "clerks," have a monopoly upon this apathy? We may answer this question from two points of view. First, is there anything in the nature of poetry, as it has been sung or written in many different kinds of societies, which would justify

putting so great a burden of *general* responsibility upon the man of imagination? Secondly, was there no other class of "intellectuals" in the modern world, scientists, philosophers, or statesmen, who might also be called into account?

If we address ourselves to the second question first, we shall have to observe that philosophers, scientists, and politicians have by and large assumed that they had no special responsibility for the chaos of the modern world. Mr. Einstein not long ago warned us that we now have the power to destroy ourselves. There was in his statement no reference to his own great and perhaps crucial share in the scientific progress which had made the holocaust possible. If it occurs, will Mr. Einstein be partly to blame, provided there is anybody left to blame him. Will God hold him responsible? I shall not try to answer that question. And I for one should not be willing to take the responsibility, if I had the capacity, of settling the ancient question of how much natural knowledge should be placed in the hands of men whose moral and spiritual education has not been impressive: by such men I mean the majority at all times and places, and more particularly the organized adolescents of all societies known as the military class.

Here we could meditate upon (or if we like better to do it, pray over) the spectacle, not military, widely reported in the newspapers, of the President of Harvard University congratulating his colleagues with evident delight when the first atom bomb was exploded in the desert. Among those present at Los Alamos there on July 14, 1945, at five-thirty in the morning, were Mr. Conant and Mr. Bush. "On the instant that all was over," reported *The New York Times*, "these men leaped to their feet, the terrible tension ended, they shook hands, embraced each other and shouted in delight." We have no right to explore another man's feelings, or to say what should please him. Nobody then or since has said that Mr. Conant's emotions, whatever they may have been on that occasion, were irresponsible. Nor do I wish to use Mr. Conant or any other scientist, or administrator of the sciences, as a whipping boy for his colleagues. Yet it is a fact that we cannot blink, that the Renaissance doctrine of the freedom of unlimited enquiry has had consequences for good and evil in the modern world. This doctrine has created our world; in

so far as we are able to enjoy it we must credit unlimited enquiry with its material benefits. But its dangers are too notorious to need pointing out. An elusive *mystique* supports the general doctrine, which may be stated as follows: We must keep up the enquiry, come hell and high water.

One way to deal with this modern demireligion is to say that a part of its "truth" must be suppressed. I am not ready to say that: I am only ready to point out that it is not suppression of *truth* to decline to commit wholesale slaughter even if we have the means of committing it beyond the reach of any known technique of the past. Is it suppression of truth to withhold from general use the means of exploiting a technique of slaughter? How might it be withheld, should we agree that it is both desirable and possible to do so? If we let government suppress it, government will in the long run suppress everything and everybody else—even democratic government. There is no just way of holding individuals and classes responsible for the moral temper of an entire civilization.

At this point the theologians and the humanists, the men of God and the men of man, appear—or at any rate formerly appeared. The Christian religion, in its various sects, has been blamed for its historic conservatism in refusing to sanction the advances of science as they were made. It is my impression that this supposedly Christian skepticism is Arabic in origin. It was the followers of Averroës in Europe who upheld the secret cult of natural knowledge against the Thomists and the Scotists, who more than the disciples of Roger Bacon stood for the diffusion of scientific enquiry. It is significant that the one science of the ancient world that impinged directly upon the daily lives of men—medicine—was held to be esoteric; the school of Hippocrates hid the secrets of the "art" lest the uninitiate abuse them and pervert them to the uses of witchcraft. This is not the place, and I am not competent enough, to follow up this line of speculation. I have wished only to observe that before the Christian dispensation, and well into it, the professors of special knowledge tried to be responsible for the public use of their techniques. We have not, so far as I know, a record of any of their reasons for what we should consider an illiberal suppression of truth. But if we think

of the Greek world of thought as having lasted about nine hundred years, down to the great pupils of Plotinus—Iamblichus and Porphyrius—we may see in it a sense of the whole of life which must not be too quickly disturbed for the prosecution of special scientific interests. Nature was investigated, but it was a nature whose destiny in relation to a transcendental order was already understood. The classical insight into this relation was, as usual, recorded very early in a myth—that of the brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus—which now gives signs of recovering the authority which in the modern world it had yielded to myths that science had created about itself.

The responsibility of the scientist has not, I am sure, been defined by this digression: I have merely suggested that if anybody have a specific responsibility it may be the scientist himself. His myth of omnipotent rationality has worked certain wonders; but perhaps a little too rapidly. In Shelley's "Defense of Poetry" there is a sentence that persons who press the poet to legislate for us seldom quote: "Our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest." Shall we hold the scientists responsible for this? Have they made the child sick on green apples? I do not say that they have. But the child is sick. If the scientist is not responsible, are philosophers, statesmen, and poets, particularly poets, responsible?

Before I return to the poet's responsibility, I shall consider briefly the possible responsibility of other persons, excluding this time the scientists, about whom it has become evident that I know little; and I can scarcely do more than allude to the other intellectual classes whose special disciplines might conceivably implicate them in care for the public good. Of the philosophers I likewise speak with neither information nor knowledge. Like Mr. Santayana, I might somewhat presumptuously describe myself as "an ignorant man, almost a poet." But one gets strongly the impression that the classical metaphysical question—What is the nature of Being?— is semantically meaningless in our age, a mere historicism reserved for the frivolous occasions of lecture-room philosophy. Our going philosophy is reported to me as a curious, apostolic activity known as the "philosophy of science," an attempt to devise a language for all the sciences which through it would arrive at

"unity." This is no doubt a laudable program, unity being usually better than disunity, unless the things to be joined do not like each other, or, again, unless the union take place at a level of abstraction at which certain things become excluded, such as human nature, of which the Nazi and the Stalinist unities for some reason took little account. But these are unities of the political order. What have the philosophers of unified science to do with them? They glanced at them, I believe, in resolutions passed at philosophical congresses, or in interviews for the press, where we were told that things will continue to go badly until men behave more rationally. Rationality usually turned out to be liberalism, or the doctrine that reason conceived in instrumental terms, will eventually perfect us, even though our situation may be getting worse every day. This, it seems to me, was the contribution of certain philosophers to the recent war. Was the contribution responsible or irresponsible? Common sense ought to tell us that it was neither; and common sense tells us that not all philosophers talked this way. Everybody knows that modern philosophers, like their brother scientists, and not unlike their distant cousins the poets, are pursuing specialisms of various kinds; and from the point of view of these interests, the investigation of the nature of being, with the attendant pursuit of the love of wisdom, is no more within their purview than it is within mine. In his extra-laboratory pronouncements the merged philosopher-scientist sounds uncomfortably like his famous creation in allegorical fiction, the "man in the street"—the man without specialisms who used to sit on the cracker barrel, and who, in all ages, since hats were invented, has talked through his hat. Perhaps it was neither responsible nor irresponsible: it was merely dull to use the prestige of the philosophy of science as the stump from which to deliver commonplaces that were already at your and my command and that were doing us so little good that they might be suspected of having caused a part of our trouble. Reason—in the sense of moderate unbelief in difficult truths about human nature—and belief in the perfectibility of man-in-the-gross, were the great liberal dogmas which underlay much of our present trouble. The men in charge of nature never told me that I ought to try to perfect myself; that would be done for me by

my not believing that I could do anything about it, by relying upon history to do it, by the invocation of ideals that many of us thought were democratic, by the resolutions of committees, conventions, and associations; and not least by affirmations of faith in the Common Man, a person with whom neither the philosopher-scientist nor I had even a speaking acquaintance. Will it not be borne in upon us in the next few years that Hitler and Stalin *are* the Common Man, and that one of the tasks of democracy is to allow as many men as possible to make themselves uncommon?

Thus it is my impression that belief in a false liberal democracy was not lacking among certain classes of "intellectuals" in the period between the Wars: the period, in fact, in which Mr. MacLeish and Mr. Brooks said that we had staggered into a war that might have been prevented had the men of letters not given us such a grim view of modern man from their ivory towers, or simply refused to be concerned about him. If the more respectable "intellectuals" were not heeded in the call to democratic action, would the mere literary men have been heeded? Was the poet's prestige so great that his loss of democratic faith (assuming he had lost it) set so bad an example that it offset the testimony to the faith of even the statesman?

By the statesman one means, of course, the politician, though one would like to mean more, whether he carry the umbrella or the infectious smile, the swastika or the hammer-and-sickle. It would seem to have been the specific duty of the politician to have kept the faith and forestalled the rise of Nazism, though it was not generally supposed that it was up to him to do anything about Soviet Russia, which was tacitly assumed, if not by you and me, then by the leaves in Vallombrosa, to be on our side. My own disappointment in the politician is somewhat mitigated by the excuse which his failure provides for the poet: if he could not balk the enemy, whom he directly confronted, what chance had the poet?—the poet, whose best weapon in history seems to have been Shelley's fleet of toy boats, each bearing a cargo of tracts, which he committed to the waters of Hyde Park.

I am sorry to sound frivolous; I confess that the political responsibility of poets bores me; I am discussing it because it irritates me

more than it bores me. It irritates me because the poet has a great responsibility of his own: it is the responsibility to be a poet, to write poems, and not to gad about using the rumor of his verse, as I am now doing, as the excuse to appear on platforms and to view with alarm. I have a deep, unbecoming suspicion of such talking poets: whatever other desirable things they may believe in, they do not believe in poetry. They believe that poets should write tracts, or perhaps autobiographies; encourage the public, further this cause or that, good or bad, depending upon whose political ox is being gored.

My own political ox was at least driven into a fence-corner when Mr. Pound thumped his tub for the Axis; but what I cannot easily forgive him was thumping any tub at all—unless, as a private citizen, dissociated from the poet, he had decided to take political action at some modest level, such as giving his life for his country, where whatever he did would be as inconspicuous as his ejaculatory political philosophy demanded that it be. But on Radio Rome he appeared as Professor Ezra Pound, the great American Poet. Much the same can be said of Mr. MacLeish himself. It is irrelevant that I find his political principles (I distinguish his *principles* from his *views*), in so far as I understand them, more congenial than Mr. Pound's. The immediate *views* of these poets seem to me equally hortatory, quasi-lyrical, and ill-grounded. We might imagine for them a pleasant voyage in one of Percy Shelley's boats. If society indicted and condemned poets for the mixture and the misuse of two great modes of action, poetry and politics, we might have to indict Mr. Pound a second time, as it could conceivably be done in some Swiftian social order; and we should have in fairness to provide an adjoining cell for Mr. MacLeish.

The relation of poetry and of other high imaginative literature to social action was not sufficiently considered in the attacks and counter-attacks of the past ten years. No one knows precisely what the relation is; so I shall not try here to define it; though what I am about to say will imply certain assumptions. There is no doubt that poetry, even that of Mallarmé, has some effect upon conduct, in so far as it affects our emotions. To what extent is the poetry itself, even that of Mallarmé, an effect? The total complex of

sensibility and thought, of belief and experience, in the society from which the poetry emerges, is the prime limiting factor that the poet must first of all be aware of; otherwise his language will lack primary reality, the nexus of thing and word. The failure to consider this primary reality produces willed poetry which usually ignores the human condition. The human condition must be faced and embodied in language before men in any age can envisage the possibility of action. To suggest that poets tell men in crisis what to do, to insist that *as poets* they acknowledge themselves legislators of the social order, is to ask them to shirk their specific responsibility, which is quite simply the reality of man's experience, not what his experience ought to be, in any age. *To whom* is the poet responsible? He is responsible to his *conscience*, in the French sense of the word: the joint action of knowledge and judgment. This conscience has long known a severe tradition of propriety in discerning the poet's particular kind of actuality. No crisis, however dire, should be allowed to convince us that the relation of the poet to his permanent reality can ever change. And thus the poet is not responsible to society for a version of what it thinks it is or what it wants. *For what* is the poet responsible? He is responsible for the virtue proper to him as poet, for his special *arête*: for the mastery of a disciplined language which will not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him by his awareness: he must hold, in Yeats' great phrase, "reality and justice in a single thought."

We have virtually turned the argument of the attack around upon itself. For it was an irresponsible demand to ask the poet to cease to be a poet and become the propagandist of a political ideal, even if he himself thought it a worthy ideal. If the report of the imagination on the realities of Western culture in the past century was as depressing as the liberal mind said it was, would not the scientist, the philosopher, and the statesman have done well to study it? They might have got a clue to what was wrong. The decay of modern society is nowhere more conspicuous than in the loss of the arts of reading on the part of men of action. It was said at the beginning of the War that the traditions of modern literature represented by Proust had powerfully contributed to the collapse of Europe. It was

not supposed that the collapse of Europe might have affected those traditions. If the politicians had been able to read Proust, or Joyce, or even Kafka, might they not have discerned more sharply what the trouble was, and done something to avert the collapse? I doubt it; but it makes as much sense as the argument that literature can be a cause of social decay. If, for example, Mr. Churchill had been able to quote the passage about Ciacco from the *Inferno*, or the second part of *The Waste Land*, instead of Arthur Hugh Clough, might we have hoped that men would now be closer to the reality out of which sound political aspiration must arise? I doubt it.

I leave this subject with the observation that poetry had to be attacked for not having done all that men had expected of it at the end of the nineteenth century. "The future of poetry is immense," said Matthew Arnold. It had to be immense because, for men like Arnold, everything else had failed. It was the new religion that was destined to be lost more quickly than the old. Poetry was to have saved us; it not only hadn't saved us by the end of the fourth decade of this century; it had only continued to be poetry which was little read. It had to be rejected. The primitive Athenians, at the Thargelian festival of Apollo, killed two human beings, burnt them, and cast their ashes into the sea. The men sacrificed were called *pharmakoi:* medicines. We have seen in our time a powerful attempt to purify ourselves of the knowledge of evil in man. Poetry is one of the sources of that knowledge. It is believed by some classical scholars that the savage ritual of the *pharmakoi* was brought to Athens by Barbarians. In historical times effigies made of dough were substituted for human beings.

*Reinhold Niebuhr* | **RELIGION AND POLITICS**

*Two essays on current tensions in American Protestantism and Catholicism*

I

There are indications that a long period of "creative tension" between the clerical leaders of American Protestantism and the American business community is coming to a close with the triumph of the business community over the churches. The creative tension (for it *was* creative on the whole) was due to the fact that the American business community is rather uncritically devoted to the principles of a laissez-faire economics, regarding "free enterprise" as a final and absolute norm of social organization, whereas the clerical leadership of the Protestant churches has been deeply influenced by the traditions of the "social gospel."

The social-gospel movement was in fact a revulsion of the religious conscience against an alliance between Protestant individualism and pietism and classical economic liberalism. This alliance was very potent from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century. The social theories of Protestantism were little more than religious versions of the economic principles of Adam Smith. A Protestant journal in 1874 declared: "Labor is a commodity [that] . . . is governed by the imperishable laws of demand and supply."

It was characteristic of this Protestant individualism that it insisted upon purely individual explanations of social injustice. Thus even Henry Ward Beecher, the famous antislavery preacher, could insist: ". . . looking comprehensively at the matter . . . the general truth will stand, that no man in this land suffers from poverty unless it be more than his fault—unless it be his *sin*."

One of the inevitable marks of this kind of individualism was the fear that economic justice might eliminate the necessity of Christian charity. "The poor we have with us always," declared a Protestant journal in the 1870's, "and this is not the greatest of our hardships, but choicest of our blessings. If there is anything a Christian may feel thankful for, it is the privilege of lifting a little of the load of some of his heavily-burdened neighbors." The thoughtful reader may remember that in the early days of the depression President Herbert Hoover opposed unemployment insurance on the ground that it would leave no room for Christian charity. The echoes of this early creed can be detected in Mr. Hoover's economic theories.

Before presenting the evidence for the recrudescence of this type of pious individualism in recent years, it is necessary to give a brief account of the effect of the social gospel upon American Protestantism. This movement was a revolt against the Protestant individualism, which refused to accept any Christian responsibility for the justice of social and political structures, and which pretended to believe that personal virtue, plus the beneficent effects of a self-regulating economy, was all that was needed.

The social-gospel movement had its rise at the end of the nineteenth century and extended to the first decades of this century. Its greatest exponents were Washington Gladden, a Congregational preacher in Columbus, Ohio, and Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist theologian. But there were many other influential figures in the movement, such as Francis Peabody of Harvard, the Wisconsin economist Richard Ely, George Herron of the Rand School, and Shailer Mathews of the University of Chicago. The most important document of the movement was undoubtedly Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, first published in 1907.

The concern for social justice expressed in this movement was the

product of the confluence of several different streams of thought. It was partly the fruit of a Christian radicalism that had developed on the American frontier, where the old sectarian pietism had lost its pure individualism and had become related to Jacksonian radicalism. It was partly the consequence of "theocratic" impulses in the heart of Calvinism—impulses intent on bringing "the whole of life under the dominion of Christ." Some of the thought of the social-gospel movement was derived from the radical ideas of the sectarians in Cromwell's army.

All of these streams of thought united to define Christianity's purpose, in the words of Rauschenbusch, "to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God."

It may be pertinent to observe that while a certain amount of Marxist thought entered into this amalgam of religious forces, the movement was, from beginning to end, highly moralistic and liberal, almost pathetically anxious to disassociate itself from every idea of a class struggle. A left wing did indeed espouse pure Marxism. This left wing, which was active primarily in the Methodist and (strangely enough) in the Episcopal Churches, also became enmeshed in the toils of Stalinism. It has served the purpose of giving American conservatives the pretext for insisting that the churches are becoming "socialistic."

Actually the social-gospel movement, despite its great virtue of insisting that social justice is a proper and necessary concern of the Christian faith, was always rather too moralistic to understand fully the operations of economic and political life with their inevitable contests of power and interest. But these defects now appear to be minor when its achievement is recognized: it delivered American Protestantism from meeting complex ethical problems of a technical civilization with an almost completely irrelevant individualistic pietism and moralism.

Perhaps the most significant organizational achievement of the social-gospel movement was that, combined with the growing church-unity movement, it created the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. This council, which brought all

major U.S. Protestant churches into a single co-operative organization, was born in 1908. In its very first meeting it adopted a "social creed" which, though subsequently amended and enlarged, has remained a guide to its social thought. In that creed it insisted upon "the right of workers to protection from the hardships often resulting from crises and industrial change; for the protection of workers from dangerous machinery and occupational disease; for the regulation of the conditions of toil for women; for the gradual and reasonable reduction of hours of labor; for a living wage as a minimum in every industry; for suitable provision for the old age of workers"; and so on. The right of collective bargaining was not asserted in this original creed, though it was implied. That right was added in a later revision; and it may be regarded as significant that the Protestant churches insisted upon this right long before the American business community was ready to grant it.

The social theories of the Federal Council, while originally inspired by the social-gospel movement, achieved a maturity beyond the earlier sentimentality. The council was as active in the field of international relations as in the field of social theory. In international relations it consistently stood for the principle of America's responsibility to the world community against the isolationist tendencies of part of the American business community. Its educational program in international affairs reached its climax after the Second World War, when John Foster Dulles directed the work of its Commission on a Just and Durable Peace.

The activity of laymen like Dulles in the affairs of the council refutes the charge of radicalism so frequently brought against it by men like John T. Flynn. The co-operation of leading laymen in its economic and social program also disproves the idea that the council represented merely clerical, as distinguished from lay, opinion. In recent years its National Study Committee on the Church and Economic Life held a series of conferences in which some of the most enlightened leaders in business, government, and labor participated.

The last conference of the old Federal Council on economic problems was held in Detroit in February, 1950. It was attended by a

genuinely representative group of laymen and clerical leaders and issued a report entitled "The Responsibilities of Christians in an Interdependent Economic World." This report contained no dogmas or isms of the Right or the Left; but it proved that decades of social idealism wedded to organizational responsibility had produced a high degree of ethical and political maturity.

The success of the Federal Council undoubtedly contributed in a very considerable degree to the formation of similar international organizations in which world Protestantism has become united. In turn, the contacts of American Protestant leaders with the leaders of Europe served to modify what Europeans always felt to be an undue optimism and sentimentality in American social thought. The world movement on Christian Life and Work began in Stockholm in 1925, developed through a conference at Oxford in 1937, and culminated in the organization of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. The Amsterdam conference, incidentally, gave the American business community a great deal of concern. For though it condemned Communism unequivocally, it also faithfully reflected Europe's and Asia's rejection of the American free-enterprise doctrine. It declared that the promise of laissez-faire capitalism, that justice would flow inevitably from economic freedom, had no more been fulfilled than the Communist promise that freedom would flow inevitably from equality.

Thus the old Federal Council of Churches was an instrument for achieving not only a viable pragmatic creed of justice for America but for relating American Protestantism to a world movement of Protestant churches. If, in that world union, American Protestantism lost some of its sentimentality in the field of political affairs, it also helped some of the churches of continental Europe overcome their undue social and political defeatism.

The question now is whether this whole period of creative tension between the Protestant churches of America and our dominant culture has come to an end. Recently a whole spate of "organizations" has arisen to re-establish the old alliance between Protestant pietism and economic individualism. The word "organizations" is put in quotation marks because these movements, though heavily financed

and able to send their literature gratis to practically every Protestant parson, are not membership organizations.

One of them, called Spiritual Mobilization, is directed by the Reverend James Fifield, Jr., of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. Its theory is that any government control of economic life is a form of "statism"; and that statism is a horrible form of idolatry that gives government the authority and reverence that are due only to God. Even the mildest deviations from laissez-faire doctrine are defined as the first step down the slippery slope that leads to Communism. This organization, like similar ones, has a political program identical with that of the National Association of Manufacturers, to which it adds merely a prayer and religious unction.

More recently a biweekly journal entitled *Christian Economics* has made its appearance. It is also so well subsidized that it can be sent free to practically every clergyman in America. This journal is convinced that a sharp distinction must be made between "man-made laws" and "God's laws." "God's laws" are nothing else but "the laws of nature" as the eighteenth-century physiocrats conceived them. They are presumably unalterable norms of social life, which prohibit every contrivance of statesmanship for the regulation of human affairs.

According to this remarkable exposition of Christian doctrine, even the Federal postal system is a mistake. We would be much better off if the government made postal service subject to competitive bidding. The combination of economic and religious naïveté exhibited in this journal is a reminder of the fact that uncritical religion is frequently a plausible, and therefore dangerous, ally of uncritical ideological positions in the political debate. It is difficult to assess the influence of these movements. They are undoubtedly intended to make American Protestantism the devoted ally of the most uncritical and nostalgic form of American liberal-conservatism. For it is clear that American conservatism in its most unviable form is a kind of decadent liberalism that thinks a return to pure classical economic liberalism is a live option for America.

The financial support of Spiritual Mobilization and *Christian*

*Economics* is something of a mystery. Both display boards of directors composed of clerical leaders. The businessmen behind them do not show their hands. Fifield's journal, *Faith and Freedom*, has a distribution of over 100,000. In an appeal letter some years ago, Fifield acknowledged a budget of $270,000, and referred his prospective donors to E. T. Weir (National Steel) and J. Howard Pew (Sun Oil and Sun Shipbuilding) as references. The same J. Howard Pew gave *Christian Economics* a check for $50,000 to start it on its way. But nothing is known of the subsequent financing. While these movements are religious versions of such organizations as Merwin K. Hart's National Economic Council and Leonard Reed's Foundation for Economic Education, they usually avoid the virulence that characterizes the polemics of Hart.

Many Protestant leaders who have labored for decades in the social and ethical program of the old Federal Council of Churches have naturally become apprehensive upon the discovery that the chairman of the finance committee of the new National Council of Churches is the same J. Howard Pew who has been one of the angels of the subsidized movements designed to bring American Protestantism back to the uncritical individualism from which it extricated itself over a period of half a century. They wonder how it is possible for a man who has insisted upon social theories which stand in absolute contradiction to the work of the Federal Council so suddenly to occupy a seat of power in an organization that is supposed to continue the traditions of the council. If Mr. Pew agrees with *Christian Economics* that unemployment insurance is wrong because "Individuals with sensitive Christian consciences will organize private charity to take care of the needy," he certainly cannot agree with the social creed of the council.

It must be explained that the new National Council of Churches has brought the old Federal Council, the International Council of Religious Education, the Home and Foreign Mission Councils, and other Protestant interdenominational agencies into one great superorganization. Two problems arise in such a new movement. The one is whether the sheer weight of organizational mechanism will not stifle some of the freedom that the several movements once had. This

question is, to use the words of Santayana, whether "the harmony of the whole may not destroy the vitality of the parts." There has been some frustration on this score, which may, however, be overcome as the new council learns how to decentralize as well as to centralize authority.

The other problem is that of providing fuel for this vast machinery. The council has a budget of four and a half million dollars. That is considerably larger than the combined budgets of all the agencies that entered it. Mr. Pew, as chairman of the finance committee, is making valiant efforts to balance the budget. Recently he made an appeal to corporations for support of the council, in which he declared that over a thousand of them had placed the council on their contribution lists. He appealed for corporation gifts on two counts: the nondenominational character of the work, and the argument that "enterprises such as ours exist as long as there is a measure of freedom in the market place and freedom in the market place is only one of freedom's many parts." The logic is not altogether clear. But if anything is meant, it must be the idea that there must be an alliance between business and religion to overcome the threat of "statism."

It is not suggested that Mr. Pew and his business friends can annul in a single stroke the history of fifty years. The clerical leadership of the National Council is highly respected in all circles. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Henry Knox Sherrill, is president of the council. Dr. Samuel M. Cavert, who, as it were, grew up with the Federal Council, is now general secretary of the National Council. Such men as Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam are in positions of leadership in it. It is impossible to believe that they would easily yield to any effort to turn the National Council into a kind of big brother of Spiritual Mobilization. Behind them are thousands of Christian leaders in the churches who fervently believe that the churches must have their own voice on questions of social justice and cannot simply sponsor the moral complacency of a segment of our business world.

But it is also difficult to believe that Mr. Pew has moved into this great organization without intending a basic alteration of its social orientation. It is therefore likely that some interesting history will be

made during the coming months in American Protestantism's central sources of authority.

II

Most American non-Catholics have a very inaccurate concept of Roman Catholic political thought and life. In this concept, it is assumed that if Catholics anywhere had their way, they would at once build a political structure as much like Spain's as possible.

This kind of reasoning is highly damaging to the mutual understanding upon which a democratic society must rest. Democracy requires more careful and discriminate judgments about friend and foe, particularly since a political foe upon one issue in the vast welter of issues may be a friend on another. Some forms of deduction proceed from the assumption that on every and any question a religious group's political attitude is dictated by its basic creed. Others do not even bother to start with the group's actual basic tenets but with tenets the group is imagined to hold.

Thus it is argued: Catholicism is an authoritarian religion. All forms of authoritarianism are (a) hostile to democracy and (b) are brothers under the skin to totalitarianism. It follows that Catholicism is antidemocratic and totalitarian. A simple syllogism then leads with seeming logic to an extravagant question: Is Catholicism any better than Communism? Even that is frequently answered without allowing common-sense evidence to muddy the clear stream of our deductive process.

There is a story about Garibaldi during his campaign for the political unification of Italy. He was told that he must expect the opposition of every village priest. He declared that he would not assume this to be true until it had been proven. He had the reward that comes to every good empiricist: it proved untrue.

I write upon this subject as a Protestant theologian who has his own misgivings about Catholic politics. They can be stated in three propositions:

In the first place, I don't like religious political parties as they exist on the continent of Europe. I believe that one great achievement of Anglo-Saxon democracy is that it has no religious parties. Religious

parties are dangerous because they tend to identify the moral ambiguities of politics (and every political position contains some moral ambiguity) with eternal sanctities. The result is that almost any kind of struggle can be interpreted as a contest between Christ and Antichrist.

Second, I think that the Catholic Church tends to identify the historic Church with the Kingdom of God, and too often its final criterion is what a political movement promises or does not promise to the historic Church. It is therefore forced at times to give preference to movements which deserve plainly to be condemned on grounds of justice. The relation of the Catholic hierarchy to Perón in Argentina is a case in point.

Finally, the reasoning of Catholic political moralists is too dependent upon deductive and intuitive "rational propositions" for my taste. I do not believe that the only escape from moral nihilism is to be found in the inflexible propositions of "natural law"; particularly not when these propositions become very detailed and commend some principle (such as prohibition of birth control or the absolute prohibition of divorce) as a moral standard fixed by God's eternal law. No one could convince me that birth control would not be advantageous in Italy, India, and some other overpopulated nations.

After this confession of prejudices, I can proceed to challenge too-simple judgments about Catholic politics.

The worst defect is that Catholicism is often judged solely as it shows itself in old (and decaying) feudal structures, whether in Spain or South America or even in French Canada. People who argue this way usually ignore the relationship of Catholicism to the political life of modern industrial society. Catholicism is at its least impressive in feudal-agrarian societies, where it frequently seeks desperately to hold on to special powers and privileges which were essential in the Middle Ages but are so no longer. Catholicism is most creative in highly developed industrial communities.

It seems completely unknown to American critics of Catholicism that the "middle ground" of European democracy is now being held, and has long been held, primarily by a combination of Catholic

and socialist parties. For obvious reasons, the alliance has never been easy. Yet for two reasons co-operation has been possible. Catholicism has always believed that "the state has the moral authority to control economic life." In a sense, therefore, Catholicism, which may have been too tender with the weaknesses of feudalism, has never capitulated to pure capitalism. It has never believed that justice would be an inevitable by-product of the free play of economic forces.

In the second place, Catholicism's relation to European labor has differed from that of Protestantism. Protestantism lost the laboring masses almost completely. Catholicism lost them too—tragically, as Pius XI admitted. But Catholicism has recently regained an organic relationship with labor; its labor organizations have become genuine trade unions, and have influenced the policies of the Catholic parties. In effect, unions have formed the bridge which has made the Catholic-socialist alliances possible.

In the Germany of the Weimar Republic, the Prussian State Government was controlled for over a decade by a Catholic-socialist alliance. In contrast to the Republic itself, the Prussian regime preserved a remarkable stability. What little stability the Weimar Republic had also depended upon this overt and sometimes covert alliance.

It must be observed that the old German Center Party did not include the Bavarian Catholics. They had their own Bavarian People's Party for the simple reason that their kind of agrarian conservatism did not fit into the policies Catholics had developed in the highly industrialized German Rhineland. Unfortunately, these two parties have since the War become one. The result is that the Adenauer Party is because of the inclusion of the Bavarians more conservative than the old Center. A few years ago some left-wing Catholics in the British Zone tried to reorganize the Center, but it was no more than a splinter group.

The differences between Catholicism in Bavaria and in the Rhineland are roughly typical of the differences between the expression of the Catholic ethos in agrarian and in industrial situations. In industrial Europe, Catholicism has had a more creative approach to politics than Protestantism because the latter (particularly in Lutheran countries)

tends to be too individualistic and too eschatological (that is to say, preoccupied with ultimate religious issues) to be capable of discriminate judgments in the endless complexities of politics.

Since the Second World War, Catholic influence upon politics in Western Europe has grown perceptibly, and only the bigoted or unrealistic could ascribe this to Vatican machinations. In France, the Popular Republicans, the M.R.P., emerged as the first strong Catholic political party in the history of the French Republic. It was heir to, and formed by, a long and distinguished line of Catholic "social" thinkers. In the first elections it won thirty per cent of the vote, but this strength proved to be ephemeral. What happened was that everyone who would have liked to back the old parties of the Right, which had been discredited by Vichyism, went along with the new party. It has steadily lost both to the older "liberal" parties and to the Gaullists, until now it commands only twelve per cent of the electorate. But it still is a very important political force. Its greatest individual contribution to French politics is perhaps Robert Schuman, who has so frequently been the Foreign Minister in recent French governments. Its left wing is eager to remove the purely religious cleavage in European politics and to work for a just social order under modern industrial conditions. It is indicative of the temper of French Catholicism that in 1951, when the Pope said it was impossible to be both Catholic and Communist, the French bishops interpreted the papal word so that it would be clear that the Church did not imply a Catholic preference for capitalism. The bishops called attention to previous papal encyclicals to show that the Church did not accept the doctrine of an unregulated economic life. (Perhaps some Americans will remember that Franklin Roosevelt, in his first campaign, justified his New Deal by appealing to Catholic political theories based on Pope Leo XIII's teachings and expounded in this country by the late Father John Ryan. Roosevelt pointed out that the "Social Creed" of the Federal Council of Churches was in substantial agreement with these teachings.)

It is hardly necessary to expound the realities of the American scene. Fortunately we do not have religious parties. But it would be well for Protestants who talk about the "reactionary" tendencies

of Catholicism to remember that, in religious terms, the main political struggles in America would appear to be between Jews and Catholics who are left of the Center and Protestants who are right of it.

The alliance between Republicanism and Protestantism is, as in Europe, prompted by the affinity between religious individualism and the political individualism of the farmer on the one hand and the businessman on the other. Catholics do not have their own trade unions in America, but no one can question that they have a sounder relation to the unions than Protestants, as such, do. This is partly due to the fact that our farmers and business people have been largely Protestant, while industrial workers, at least in the North, are predominantly Catholic and, in certain sections and trades, Jewish. The imbalance is no doubt related to the historic pattern of migration to our shores. A good deal of Catholic politics in America is strictly "lay Catholicism." The fact is that the best Catholic politics in Europe is also "lay," or so it seems at least to an observer who has anticlerical prejudices.

This does not mean that sharp distinction can be drawn between clerical conservatism and lay progressivism. Some of the more radical tendencies in European Catholic politics emanate from neither lay nor clerical sources but from various Catholic orders. There are individual bishops in every Catholic country—even in Spain—who cannot be branded conservative. Take as an example the recent unexplained tension in Quebec between an archbishop, who had ordered collections in the churches for some strikers, and the very conservative Quebec Government under Premier Duplessis. The archbishop resigned—no one knows just why. It would seem unlikely that a politician could defeat an archbishop in the councils of the Vatican. But, in the absence of any authoritative explanation, many Canadian observers draw the conclusion that, in this case, this did happen.

In international politics, there is the same need for circumspection. A favorite theory of anti-Catholics is that the Pope is scheming for another world war because of Catholic losses in lands behind the Iron Curtain, particularly in Poland and Hungary. Catholic prelates

have indeed made statements which seem to support a "preventive" war. When a pious Catholic Secretary of the Navy voiced such sentiments over a year ago (sentiments which were subsequently repudiated by the Administration), the case seemed to be complete for the theory that American Catholic leaders want a preventive war.

Yet there is strong evidence that the Vatican is strongly opposed to the idea. There is certainly no question that the Catholic statesmen and clerical leaders of Western Europe are opposed to it. They are also very critical of what one of them has called the "sterile anti-Communism" of some American Catholics. The Pope's Christmas message of 1951 with its "plague o' both your houses" note should help refute the usual concept of Vatican foreign policy.

Incidentally, there is no evidence of simple unanimity among clerical leaders of America on problems of international politics. We tend to assume that the position of the most vocal Cardinals is generally accepted. This assumption may be false, but those of us who accept it are not altogether to blame. For Catholic leaders do not criticize each other in public. Nor do they publicly disassociate themselves, although they may privately, from Catholic positions in other nations—Spain, for instance. Thus they are partly responsible for the myth of a monolithic Catholic party, speaking with the same voice throughout the world.

Still it is dangerous for all of us to give the myth credence. Catholicism naturally has a greater unity of discipline than other religious communities. But it has the freedom to relate itself to various national situations. It also has many moral and spiritual resources which can act creatively in a free and responsible society.

*Francis Fergusson*

# THREE NOVELS

*All the King's Men*, by Robert Penn Warren, *Guard of Honor*, by James Gould Cozzens, and *The Middle of the Journey*, by Lionel Trilling, are three novels published since the War. They are examples of the best our American fiction can show. Each of them has high intelligence and art; they all have interesting and serious themes; and it would be possible and profitable to do a long study of any one of them.

They are still more interesting when considered together, partly because they are so different. The three of them suggest the unmapped complexity of the United States in our time. They are all American novels, all attempt to treat a central theme; and yet it is clear that the three authors live not only in different geographical parts of the country, but in different cultural milieux. If the reader tries to think them over together he will experience a slight feeling of uneasiness akin to that of indigestion. Can it be that the visions of our best novelists are as unrelated as they seem? Are they all really picturing American life? Is each of them writing for his own audience, or is there one General Reader whom they all address, and who is expected to be able to accept them all? Such questions as these lead to

fundamental problems which our fiction-writers have to face. Messrs. Warren, Cozzens, and Trilling are very conscious of the difficulties of novel-writing; they are at least as uneasy as the reader. Each has his own version of the problem of contemporary American fiction, and his own artful solution.

The scenes of the three novels are different, but each one is concerned with a social scene rather than with the fate of an individual. Mr. Warren's *All the King's Men* shows an important political movement in the South; Mr. Cozzens' *Guard of Honor* a great air base during the War, and Mr. Trilling's *The Middle of the Journey* a struggle over political and philosophical ideas. This focus upon society shows that the authors share that uneasiness I spoke of; they are not sure of the meaning of their narratives. They see their characters in relation to social forces which dwarf them. They are all groping for a myth of contemporary man in his infinitely diverse, expanding, and changing society.

It is becoming impossible for us to sit down in comfort to read one of those Victorian novels in which the social scene appears to change (if at all) with glacial slowness. Jane Austen, George Eliot, even Hardy could trace the troubles of their characters in the calm certainty that the social order and its familiar types would be recognizable still when their work was printed. And they did not suffer from the problem of "one world": their British scenes were the world to them, even if an occasional rake went "out to Paris." The sense of rapid change, of the dependence of our lives upon historic currents which we do not understand, and upon forces, in some other part of the world perhaps, which we cannot clearly see, is with us whether we like it or not. Politicians, generals, wage-earners, physicists, bankers feel it as well as addicts of fiction. We instinctively, and properly, ask our novelists for an imaginative grasp of human fate even when the forms of human life are dissolving and mingling; and they try to provide it.

"Sing to me, goddess, of the rage of Achilles," says Homer at the beginning of the *Iliad*. The goddess responds with a portrait of that prima donna among warriors, a panorama of the Trojan War, an image of War itself. Disorder and folly is the theme, but the *picture*

composes it; it is accepted and ordered at a deep level. Homer does not prescribe a cure; he offers satisfaction of a different kind, harder to get, more intimate, closer to our uncensored impressions of the human situation. I remind you of this, not in order to ask our novelists to be Homer, but to point out that they do not have to be social planners either. Their art is related in many ways to the politician's, but not identical with it.

The three novelists whom I am discussing are aware of all these difficulties in the way of modern fiction. They are forewarned and forearmed. Each of them has chosen a limited theme, one which it might be possible to control, and proceeded to define it in accord with his own talent, background, and philosophy.

I begin with *All the King's Men*, because it has more of the imaginative scope of poetry than the others. The central story of Mr. Warren's novel is that of the rise to power, the reforming zeal, the corruption and finally the murder of Willie Stark, a figure based upon the late Huey Long.[1] Around the central story many subsidiary narrative strands are woven; and through them we see journalists and farmers, political racketeers and businessmen, bewildered survivors of the old well-to-do classes, in their struggles with each other, and in their attempts to master the industrial power of the new South. The figure of Stark, though very convincing and interesting in itself, is only the center of a panorama of a provincial society in rapid change.

Mr. Warren belongs with Faulkner, Tate, Ransom, Porter, Caldwell, and other distinguished Southerners of various literary persuasions, all of whom suffer and try to digest the changes, usually interpreted as dissolution, which the South has been undergoing since the Civil War. The South, more than any other part of the United States, has misfortunes, and also traditions, both humane and linguistic, which are common to the region, and give it a certain spiritual being. Hence the vitality of contemporary Southern writing. *All the King's Men* has this vitality: it is clear that Mr. Warren has something to say. The characters are objectively living, the language

[1] (1893–1935) U.S. Senator from, and Governor of, Louisiana, who was considered a demagogue by many of his contemporaries.

is firm and natural, and full of flashes of poetry. Mr. Warren seems to be talking about people and themes which he has known and instinctively understood for a long time. His prose sometimes touches deep roots, accumulations of meaning beyond the power of the individual merely to *invent*. In short, Mr. Warren speaks for more than himself in this novel: its poetry and authenticity come not only from his talent, but from the human, social, and linguistic forms of his native region.

But still, there is an important distinction between what might be called the materials, the basic inspiration of a work, and the ultimate form and meaning of the whole. *All the King's Men* swarms with life; it seems to have the root of poetry in it; yet most readers have felt (and I among them) that it does not quite achieve imaginative coherence. And no wonder; for what Mr. Warren perhaps wanted to make, what the novel sometimes threatens to become, is a panorama of man-in-society in the grand manner, something comparable to one of Shakespeare's histories.

Mr. Warren first planned the Stark tale as a poetic drama, and wrote it as such. I saw an early version of this drama in 1940. The main plot—the story of Willie Stark—was about as we know it in the novel, but most of the subplots had not yet appeared. It was in verse, and the dialogue scenes alternated with choruses in lyric verse-forms. The effect of the choruses, if they had been completely successful, would have been to frame the action in a wider context of meaning; to place it, and to emphasize the poetic scope of the whole story. There is now another version of this play, and also a film which was made, not from the play, but from the novel. It would be interesting to study these transformations, to enquire what two different theater directors were able to make of the story which certainly has a not-quite realized, and very tempting, legendary quality. But instead of attempting that (it would lead us too far afield) I proceed to enquire what Mr. Warren did when he rewrote the original play as a novel.

When Mr. Warren turned from the theater to the novel, his native storytelling genius was released. The subplots, full of inherently fascinating characters, incidents, and scenes, clustered about

the central theme. Mr. Warren made room for them all, in obedience to his inspiration. He seems to have an inexhaustible store of Southern lives, sights, sounds, and incidents—the immediately exploitable materials of naturalistic fiction. But with all this wealth, the problem of form remained. Mr. Warren endeavored to solve it by replacing the choruses of the play with the narrator of the novel, Jack Burden. That character took over the essential function of framing, defining, and placing the action of the novel as a whole.

Jack Burden is admirably fitted to be the "central intelligence" (as Henry James would have said) through whose eyes the reader gets the story, and learns to understand it. He comes of a good family, and so knows intimately the survivors of the upper class of the Old South. A former student of Southern history, he knows the quality of life before the Civil War. A newspaperman, passionately interested in social justice, he can follow Stark's early attempts at reform with knowledge, hope, and sympathy. And yet he does not quite succeed as chorus, or as Jamesian passionate spectator. He can tell us what happened, but not what to make of it. The typical Jamesian central intelligence, Fleda Vetch, for instance, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, learns and grows as her far simpler drama unfolds. The end of the story for her is very gloomy, but she accepts it, and thereby gives the reader a sense that the action has some sort of general validity or symbolic value. Her growing, sad wisdom *is* the form and meaning of the novel. But Jack Burden does not really grow and learn in this sense. He is disillusioned rather than made sadder and wiser; thwarted rather than broken and remade. And the reader, looking in vain for the imaginative coherence of the rich scenes of the novel, shares Burden's undigested sense of failure.

But in making this observation I do not wish to be misunderstood. In comparing *All the King's Men* with masterpieces I am paying it a back-handed compliment. No one knows how its rich, diverse, and suggestive elements could be composed. No one knows the answer to the problems—historic, philosophic, or artistic—which it raises.

The South provided Mr. Warren with a great deal, nothing less than the authentic root, or source, of literature. But the Southern

tradition does not seem to have offered him the means of composing the rich materials. When Shakespeare wrote his histories, he had the benefit of a myth of British history which had been developing in the work of many predecessors, historians, poets, and other playwrights, as Tillyard has shown. But there seems to be no way to understand the Southern story in Southern terms. *All the King's Men* is far more than local color, but it does not find a more-than-local awareness to appeal to. One feels that the forces at work in the story are not quite in focus; the uncontrolled dynamism of modern industry, for example: perhaps Stark is only its puppet. Or shall we say that like Hitler he is a symptom of the vast discontents of the rootless modern populations? We do not know; the picture grows vague around the edges; the real scene and the real drama (whatever it may be) is not quite grasped. Reading the novel in New York or Michigan, it looks like more than a study of Huey Long, and less than an image of our contemporary fate.

Mr. Cozzens tackles an analogous problem with a very different background of experience, a different philosophy, and different literary resources. *Guard of Honor* does not picture the society of an old part of the country, like *All the King's Men*, but the momentary and rootless society of the Ocanara Air Base in Florida, shortly before the invasion of Europe. Mr. Cozzens, like Mr. Warren, does not rely on the significance of individual destiny, but endeavors to picture a large aggregation of lives. He is interested in officers and enlisted men, Negro trainees, journalists, flyers, technicians, Wac's[2] and generals. In the background he suggests the Florida town which is temporary host to the Air Base. Looking in the other direction from Ocanara, we vaguely make out Washington, the top brass, and dimmest and most remote of all, the global disturbance of the War. It is evident that Mr. Cozzens gave himself a very formidable assignment, merely in literary engineering. And the first thing to say about *Guard of Honor* is that it is organized with superb intelligence. The reader never loses his way among the innumerable and variegated denizens of the Base. Mr. Cozzens knew just what he was about; and

[2] Women enlisted for noncombat duties in the Women's Army Corps.

when he typed the last word, he might have added with crisp pride, "mission accomplished."

But one must next enquire just what (beyond accurate reporting) Mr. Cozzens did wish to do. What is the dramatic point, what is the form and meaning he wishes to show us in the tangled life of Ocanara?

*Guard of Honor* records three days at the Air Base. The talented young General Beal has just taken command, and he and the trouble-shooter, Colonel Ross, are at the center of the vast picture. Colonel Ross, an older man who had been a judge in civilian life and an Army officer in World War I, has to deal with the disputes which arise in the daily running of the Base, and decide the problems of policy which they present. We see them all from his point of view. A brilliant but temperamental flyer, Carricker, beats up a Negro trainee, and that raises the whole ramified social-political-ethical problem of the Negro officers in training. Between the intransigent temperament of Carricker, the feeling in the nearby Florida community, and the official nonsegregation policy of the Army, a host of unsolvable problems is generated. While the scandals spread through the Base, giving all sorts of trouble-makers their opportunity, General Nichols, top brass from Washington, arrives to make an inspection. On the last of the three days covered in the novel a great air review is staged in Nichols' honor, and seven paratroopers are drowned when they are ineptly dumped out over a lake. Mr. Cozzens shows great ingenuity in using these few events to weave together the stories of many men and a few women from various regions and social strata of the country.

Mr. Cozzens' grasp of American life is not based upon long familiarity with a single region, like Mr. Warren's, but upon his wisdom in the ways of the upper middle class, which is very much the same all over the country. He has profound respect for the responsible citizens who actually make our civilization work. Ibsen called them "pillars of society," and made the very term imply hypocrisy. Mr. Cozzens on the other hand likes to portray this class from the point of view of a member of one of the great professions, Law, the Church, Medicine; and by that means he brings out the

humane values he sees in *his* pillars of society. Colonel Ross is the typical Cozzens protagonist; both as judge and as semiprofessional soldier, his is the responsibility for making the Base work. He is courageous, modest, shrewd; he has the dignity which comes from doing an indispensable job, and it is impossible not to share Mr. Cozzens' admiration for him.

Insofar as the life of the Base has order and human meaning, it is because of the Colonel's benevolent rule over it. Moreover, the Colonel thinks, in such moments as he can snatch from paperwork, interviews, and committee meetings; and his musings suggest the pattern which Mr. Cozzens wishes to show in his complicated panorama. Thus in the design of *Guard of Honor* Colonel Ross has a function like that of Jack Burden in *All the King's Men*; the Colonel is Mr. Cozzens' central intelligence. And if one compares him with Jack Burden one may get a quick glimpse of the fundamental difference between the two novels.

I complained of Jack Burden that he could not digest all that he saw and suffered, and that just as he was thwarted and puzzled at the end, so was the reader who had depended on his understanding. Colonel Ross on the contrary is integrated and morally fit throughout, and he is sustained by a creed which serves him in every contingency. "Every man must stand up and do the best he can with what he has," Colonel Ross says to himself, as he thinks over the follies and weaknesses he has had to cope with all day. This sane and sturdy maxim enables the Colonel to get through his work, and it enables Mr. Cozzens to show us how the Base gets along day by day, and hour by hour. In spite of folly and perversity, the military horde is pulled together with rough-and-ready justice, patience, and pity, largely supplied by the Colonel himself. Thus the Colonel, at the center, is completely adequate to the necessary role which Mr. Cozzens designed for him—or rather the double role, of protagonist, keeping the Base's flood of destructive power pouring forth, and spectator, interpreting the scene for the reader. Mr. Cozzens makes a technical success with the novel very much like the Colonel's in his administrative job.

My complaint of Colonel Ross and his novel is the opposite of the

one I made of Burden and his novel: the Colonel sees and imagines too little. The dust cover of *Guard of Honor* says, "This book is immense in its implications," and adds, "It is part of the author's achievement that his effect is obtained without moralizing, wholly in terms of incident and drama." That is not quite true, for the Colonel is a moralizer, though so pragmatic and laconic a one; and without his moralizing the novel would have no shape at all. The question is, how adequate is the Colonel's moral philosophy to the action and the scene before him?—To which I should reply, completely adequate to what Mr. Cozzens wishes to show, but quite inadequate to the War which looms behind the immediate scene as its unexplored basis. Given the War, given Ocanara as one of its manifestations, the Colonel's maxims ("In the last resort every man sits only on his own bottom") have an empirical and immediate validity. They help us to see how the Colonel got through his period of military service, they show us how the bombs, the bombers, and the bombardiers were assembled. But can the reader fail to wonder what all those men and machines were doing in Ocanara in the first place? Can he fail to imagine the Japs and the Russians exercising the same simple virtues as the Colonel's, doing the best they can with what they have; the Nazis, the English, the Partisan French—not to mention the Alaskans and the Senegambians—courageously seated on *their* bottoms, feeling just as manly as the Colonel did, but carried, like him, virtue and all, on a tide they never think of questioning? The immediate scene of Ocanara is clear, as we see it through the Colonel's eyes; but the forces which make and move it are in the surrounding blackness. The effect is like that of a candid-camera shot: literally clear, but not fundamentally ordered or intelligible. In other words, the Colonel's focus, though sharp, is too narrow.

If *Guard of Honor* has vast implications as the dust cover says, it is in the same way as newspaper headlines and newsreels have vast implications. They are there, but they are not perceived, accepted, or digested. It is impossible not to be disturbed by reading the paper, but newspaper headlines do not give us the pleasure and insight we look for in the order of art. I have great admiration for *Guard of Honor*; it is successful in what it tried to do. But it tried to do less

than we instinctively demand of a novel, and the reader is left stimulated and impressed, but unsatisfied.

Mr. Cozzens and Mr. Warren both start with a segment or aspect of the American scene, and proceed then to limit their canvas, and organize its contents. *All the King's Men* has a deep and rich life to compose; *Guard of Honor* is closer to the best journalism, like Dos Passos' account of the Nuremberg trials. They are very different in texture, but in both cases we are convinced by the sights and sounds, the voices and the faces and the incidents of American life. If both are less than satisfying, it is not because they lack the materials of fiction, but because their materials are not quite ordered or defined.

Mr. Trilling, in *The Middle of the Journey*, starts at the other end of the problem: not with a large segment of the American social scene, but with ideas about the form and meaning of contemporary history; the historical and philosophical problems which he finds central. He has of course a scene and people in it; but the scene is Crannock, Connecticut, and the people are a few New York professors and journalists on their summer vacation. Like Warren and Cozzens, he is not primarily concerned with individual destiny, but he gives us, instead of a direct picture of a society, an account of thinking about society, or as he puts it, a novel of ideas.

After the crash of 1929 the urban and university intellectuals of the kind Mr. Trilling knows so well became, almost to a man, Marxists of one kind or another. Those with a religious temperament joined the party, the rest remained fellow-travelers. In the early 'thirties they wrote novels, plays, history, and criticism in which the world was interpreted according to Marx. But the events of the next ten years discouraged most of them, and by the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact the Marxian myth itself was widely doubted. Some of the religious Marxists switched to a Christian church, while the fellow-travelers attempted to explain themselves as Liberals—a word which had been in very bad odor before the crash and during the Marxian period just after it. One of the themes which have preoccupied our intellectuals (since the War) has been Liberalism—always in shifting and uneasy relation to the political or religious traditions which it

liberalizes. It is still not clear to me whether one can be a Liberal without being a liberal *something*—just Liberal, not further defined.

It is this recent bit of highbrow history, with its unresolved puzzles, which underlies Mr. Trilling's novel, and gives it its location in the American scene. The protagonist is John Laskell, a youngish professor from New York. The time is the early 'thirties, and Laskell, who is convalescing from a serious illness, comes to Crannock to spend the summer near his very good friends the Crooms. Arthur Croom is a statistician from the same city university; Nancy is his opinionated and sunburned wife. Both are alert and extremely articulate fellow-travelers, and at that historic moment they feel no contradiction between their liberalized and Freudianized Marxian creed and their emancipated but respectable way of life, with its progressive nursery schools, its Bach and Stravinsky phonograph records, its modernized New England farmhouse, and its general adherence to democratic principles. But presently this up-to-date little colony is visited by Gifford Maxim, and he introduces the doctrinal issues which will painfully divide them. Maxim had been a religious Communist, high in the American Communist hierarchy, a high priest of the cult which the Crooms have professed in a liberal manner. The Crooms had felt a little guilty for not accepting the party discipline as Maxim did, for they had felt that he had the only answer to the world's problems. But now Maxim announces that he has been converted to Christianity, which in his case means chiefly Original Sin. The Crooms are horrified, of course; they feel betrayed by the very man they had counted on to sustain them in their optimistic and humanitarian leftism. A series of rather painful disputes ensues between Maxim, the Crooms, and Laskell, and these philosophical struggles are the substance of the novel.

Laskell finds that he disagrees with both Maxim and the Crooms. He had been very fond of the Crooms, but after his illness, after reading the papers and listening to Maxim, they begin to seem to him (as they had, perhaps, to the reader, from their first appearance) unbearably smug and childish. Maxim, on the other hand, frightens and dismays him. That character may be based on direct observation, for there are some very well-observed passages in his disputes

with Laskell. He also seems to echo Dostoevski's religious sinners, and Thomas Mann's synthetic monster Naphta, in *The Magic Mountain*. Laskell gradually comes to see him as pathological or evil or both, and as the novel ends, with Laskell taking the train back to the city for the fall term, we are given to understand that all of the characters are permanently estranged from each other.

Mr. Trilling is at his best when he presents the discussions at Crannock. There are also pictures of Crannock natives, and a shadowy love affair between Laskell and a rather unconvincing Greenwich Village woman he meets there; but it is in the study of New York's advanced political thinkers of the 'thirties that we feel Mr. Trilling's knowledge and skill. His characters are as honest as they know how to be, and well read in the modern literature which was fashionable at the time. Mr. Trilling knows how they phrase their thoughts, and where the thoughts come from. I should say that it was the spirits of Marx and Freud, to a lesser degree Dostoevski and D. H. Lawrence, that have nourished the young professors, and now seem to hover benevolently over their earnest "mental fight." Farther in the background we are aware of their inherited morality, the residuum of liberal protestantism or Ethical Culture—a layer of righteousness below their ideas, and visible only as prejudice or doctrinaire broadmindedness. The picture of this small, articulate, and very solemn group is accurate and convincing.

But Mr. Trilling is not primarily interested in his characters as individuals, but in the ideas they discuss. The Crooms have a complacent and sentimental version of liberalism; Maxim a sort of all-purpose theocratic-totalitarian-pessimism. Laskell emerges at the end with a kind of liberal humanism which aspires to be tougher than the Crooms, and healthier than Maxim. Laskell is both protagonist and narrator; his spiritual pilgrimage in the course of the summer makes the form and movement of the novel. Laskell is thus the central intelligence corresponding to Mr. Warren's Jack Burden and Mr. Cozzens' Colonel Ross. In order to assess Mr. Trilling's success with the difficult problem of the novel of ideas, and also to compare his art with that of the other two novels, it is convenient to enquire what he did with Laskell.

Mr. Trilling's basic strategy for putting ideas into fiction is suggested in the title of his book, which is taken from the first line of the *Divine Comedy*:

In the middle of the journey of our life
I came to myself in a dark wood,
where the straight way was lost.

Just as Dante, having lost his way, had to see Hell, and then go on to sort out the cultural conflicts of his time in order to save his soul, so Laskell, after the nightmarish illness which interrupts his career, must struggle with Maxim's evil, and sort out the political-philosophical creeds offered to him, in order to regain *his* psychic health. In other words, Mr. Trilling proposes to give his ideas life and dramatic force by showing how they may nourish or poison a human life. This is a very important and interesting thing to try to do; it seems to me that Mr. Trilling has opened up an approach to contemporary fiction which might be much further explored, by him and by other writers. But, as the somewhat disproportionate comparison with Dante shows, it would be terribly difficult to write the spiritual epic of our time.

I return to the more manageable comparison with the other two novels. In accordance with his plan, Mr. Trilling has more ideas about man in society, and fewer men and less society, than the other novels. Through Jack Burden's eyes we see the tragic life of a Southern community in a thousand contexts. Colonel Ross is engaged, to the limits of his capacity, in the variegated troubles of Ocanara. But Laskell has chiefly Maxim and the Crooms to deal with, and they are hardly enough to substantiate either Laskell or the philosophies at issue. Mr. Trilling's intellectuals handle themselves and their ideas with unsmiling fervor; but the reader cannot feel as they do, that what they decide to think will have much effect upon the world, or even upon them. While they were having their arguments in Crannock, Jack Burden was glimpsing the agonies of the South in its mysterious disorders. Colonel Ross's middle class, largely immune to the ideas which the Crooms and Laskell found

important, was slowly moving toward war. One does not have to go any further afield than the other two novels, in order to see how difficult it is to give *ideas* about man in society any reality in modern fiction. Mr. Trilling, like the others, suffers from the fact that we do not have an adequate diagnosis of the forces which may really be at work in our societies.

But as I say Mr. Trilling was aware of this difficulty, and proposed to solve it by showing us what the ideas mean to Laskell, at least, if not to the world at large. I find Laskell's illness and convalescence in the first part of the book, and also his painful relations with Maxim, both convincing and significant. That drama clearly and sensitively epitomizes something important in contemporary experience. But toward the end of the book Laskell grows a little hollow, as though his diet of thinking had given him some of the ghostliness of the concepts themselves. Having rejected both Maxim's sensational religiosity and the Crooms' stifling and malicious optimism, he ends very much in the position of Colonel Ross: courageously seated on his own bottom, pinning his faith to his own decency, a liberal not further defined. But Colonel Ross does not make the impression of being nobody and nowhere. He is narrow, but he is solid; and his solidity is due to the fact that he is involved with men and things first, and ideas second. Above all, he is responsible for immediate practical decisions, and as he makes them, and takes the consequences, he acquires moral being. Laskell is responsible only for rejecting Maxim and the Crooms, and they must seem to the reader, I think, unpromising guides for a convalescent soul from their first appearance.

The shadowy impression of Laskell, waiting in the Crannock station for the suburban train to take him back to the university, is the right ending for the novel, because so many of us can recognize ourselves in this unglamorous picture. We may smile ruefully as we contemplate Associate Professor Laskell, for we all read the papers, have misunderstandings with our friends, and try to the best of our ability to weigh Original Sin in one hand and Dialectical Materialism in the other. If Mr. Trilling had only smiled a little more himself, as Shaw did toward the end of his career, when he suddenly sensed his fifty years of brisk intellectual conversation as a farce against a dark

and mysterious background, his novel of ideas would have been stronger and truer.

There would be a great deal to learn from a detailed study of *The Middle of the Journey*, both because of the problem it sets itself, and because of the intelligence with which Mr. Trilling has planned it. The same is true of *All the King's Men* and of *Guard of Honor*. The method I have adopted in this paper—that of comparison—makes it difficult to do justice to any of the works I have discussed. I have tried to adopt the point of view of a reader who is neither a Southerner, a man of action, nor a New York intellectual, but an innocent consumer of American fiction. We are all in that position from time to time, whatever our own cultural suburb may be; we are all more or less displaced persons, uncomfortably afloat in the national melting pot.

For that reason it would be rash to try to go beyond the novelists themselves, and generalize about them all. Together they suggest the varied, complex, rich and shifting human life of the country in its instinctive search for form and meaning. They also show the high level which the art of fiction has reached. Thirty years ago one could not have found three novels as serious and as sophisticated as these. Perhaps they are signs of a general effort in this country for understanding and control; parts of a pattern of cultural growth which we cannot yet make out.

*All The King's Men* by ROBERT PENN WARREN. New York, 1946, Harcourt Brace, $3.75; New York, 1948, Grosset & Dunlap, $1.79; New York, 1951, Bantam, $0.35; London, 1948, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 12/6.

*Guard of Honor* by JAMES GOULD COZZENS. New York, 1948, Harcourt Brace, $3.50; Garden City, New York, 1952, Permabooks, $0.35; London, 1949, Longmans, Green & Company, 12/6.

*The Middle of the Journey* by LIONEL TRILLING. New York, 1947, Viking Press, $3.00; London, 1948, Secker & Warburg, 12/6.

*Sydney Freedberg* | **HYMAN BLOOM**

*The career to date*
*of a major modern painter*

Hyman Bloom was brought to the United States from Latvia in 1920, as a child of seven. He grew up in Boston, in a family environment that remained in part European while at the same time he learned, with the swift adaptability of children, to explore and to become part of the New World. A precocious artistic talent was early recognized and encouraged in the public schools which the boy attended, and it was most sympathetically developed by a teacher of art in a community center in Bloom's neighborhood. When Bloom was about seventeen his teacher, Harold Zimmerman, and a fellow pupil then equally promising, Jack Levine, were taken under the protection of a professor in Harvard University's Department of Fine Arts and given a meager subsistence while their education was continued. This education was essentially traditional, at least in the sense of the kind of artistic models to which Bloom was exposed. There were, in these years, no works by important contemporary painters, either European or American, to be seen in Boston. It was the study of reproductions rather than originals that impelled Bloom's first break with traditional style; between 1935 and 1938 he did a series of paintings in the manner of Rouault, chiefly of

circus subjects. The convention of Rouault's borrowed style turned out to be, in its way, as unfertile for the encouragement of Bloom's own expression as had the more traditional styles. Bloom has sought out and destroyed all but one of these derivative pictures.

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The first painting of which Bloom admits that it demonstrates the kernel of his own, rather than a learned and borrowed personality, is the *Stove* (whereabouts unknown) painted in 1938 at the age of twenty-five. There is an evident derivative quality in the style here too, but the derivation is from artists—Soutine and Kokoschka, again known in reproduction rather than in original—who demonstrate a genuine temperamental affinity with the personality that Bloom was to become and whose style could provide a basis for Bloom's own development. The *Stove* is further, unlike the earlier pictures, not based on a borrowed image but on a personal response to a familiar object. The *Christmas Tree* of 1939 (Boston Museum of Fine Arts) is similarly born of the artist's own confrontation with a visual and emotional experience, but like the *Stove* the language of this picture is not yet fully Bloom's own.

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It was in the long course of evolving the *Synagogue* (Museum of Modern Art, New York), painted mostly during 1940, that Bloom emerged into a wholly personal style. The effect of this large painting, seen in the perspective of Bloom's previous development, is profound and startling. We are confronted suddenly with the impress of individuality and power that is made by a major work of art. Reminiscences of Soutine or Kokoschka are submerged in a technique of simultaneous new boldness and discipline. The luminosity of the *Christmas Tree* is here, but it is expressed in sharper and more forceful strokes of color. The figures stand in tight ranks, tier behind tier in a skillfully suggested space, shining and flickering like the chandeliers above them; there are hardly any human identities here but only beings consumed in light. This glittering painting of the figures, with their attenuation and distortion, suggests a

Byzantinism infused with a new religious fervor. In this congregation only the cantor has a real existence. The ardor that inspires the picture rises through his dominating form and cries itself through his open mouth. The tremolo, shimmering passion of his cry vibrates through the painting like the light and becomes one with it as it exalts, disembodies, and consumes its listeners.

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The realm of experience from which this complete interpenetration of form and content came, and with it Bloom's first individual expression of style, was profoundly personal to the artist. Despite the rejection of dogma and specific teachings that are usual to the Jewish youth brought up in the American environment, there remained in Bloom the strong sense of the singular meaning and the stubborn force of the religious tradition behind him. The *Synagogue* embodies Bloom's realization of that tradition's intensest spiritual poignancy and power.

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The *Synagogue* contained within its repertory of images more than one motive of sufficient interest to demand separate attention from the artist: hence Bloom's isolation, from the large picture, of the theme of the Elder of the Congregation who holds the Scroll of the Law. This motive, the *Jew with Torah*, became the subject of a series of pictures, the first painted in 1941 and three others painted over a span of six succeeding years. Just as these pictures derive and develop from the *Synagogue* in form so do they develop in idea out of, and in a sense beyond, that painting. Here the Jew is shown not merely in the affirmation of his own faith, but in the revelation of the meaning of that faith to the world. He is the bearer and defender of the Ancient Law which is not only his, but the whole world's heritage.

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The evolution of this series of *Jews with Torah* through six years forcefully indicates Bloom's own growing powers; but these pictures are interesting also for their revelation of a cardinal fact of his

art: his complete adjustment of painterly technique and pictorial form, in each picture he creates, to its special character of content. Each of the *Jews with Torah* is different in personality and in the variant of the idea he is intended to convey, and each picture is painted in a differing mode, wholly integrated to the expression of its subject. Bloom becomes, in these years, a virtuoso with paint but he is a virtuoso without a formula. Each subject must, in patient and profound search, find its completely apposite style. It is this process of intense artistic conscience that makes Bloom's production so relatively slow and rare, but which also makes each work so meaningful.

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Bloom's last essay in this theme dates from 1947 (collection Earle Ludgin). The Jew here is no longer merely an Elder of the Congregation, but a Rabbi, who communicates neither the fanaticism nor the rugged patience of the earlier *Jews*, but a serene, radiant wisdom. The picture unfolds itself in this spirit, in broad clear rhythms and high-keyed, singing colors. An effect of heroic dignity is suggested by the singular point of vision: the eye is lifted across the monumental seated form and ascends into the shining space above. The radiant dignity of feeling has transmuted into full accord all the properties of form. The picture expresses to a singular degree Bloom's ambition to communicate an idea as wholly as possible in terms of visual experience and coherent pictorial form.

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Because of the slow process of maturing of each single picture—the painting we finally see is the end result of repeated obliterations and patient reshapings on the same canvas—it is understandable that Bloom should work on more than one picture concurrently. As one theme, like the *Jew with Torah*, is being carried to an ultimate formulation, another theme may be slowly taking shape on another canvas, and yet another idea may be receiving its initial form in a third painting. Contemporaneously with the earliest of the *Torah* pictures, in 1941, Bloom evoked a subject from a still more intimate

*an Bloom:* THE SYNAGOGUE (c. 1940)
ction The Museum of Modern Art, New York

*Hyman Bloom:* CHRISTMAS TREE (1939)
Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

*Hyman Bloom*, JEW WITH TORAH (1942–44)
Collection Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts

*Hyman Bloom:* THE BRIDE II (1943-45)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger, New York

*man Bloom:* JEW WITH TORAH (c. 1945)
llection Mr. and Mrs. George W. W. Brewster, Brookline, Massachusetts

*yman Bloom*. RABBI (1947)
ollection Mr. and Mrs. Earle Ludgin, Hubbard Woods, Illinois

*Hyman Bloom:* THE BRIDE (1941)
Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York

*Hyman Bloom:* CHILD IN THE GARDEN (1943-45)
Collection Mr. Ralph Coburn at The Boris Mirski Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts

*Hyman Bloom:* CHANDELIER (1945)
Collection Mr. Stanley J. Wolf, Kenilworth, Great Neck, New York

*Hyman Bloom:* CHANDELIER (1943-44)
Collection New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Connecticut

*Hyman Bloom:* CHRISTMAS TREE (1945)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. George Kennedy, Cambridge, Massachusetts

*Hyman Bloom:* THE HARPIES (1946–47)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. George Kennedy, Cambridge, Massachusetts

and inward region of his personality. It was an idea which, though more personal, was also more universal; lying in the core of the artist's being, it lay also in the core of all humanity. The first statement of this subject was the *Bride* (Museum of Modern Art, New York). The picture is, by the artist's own valuation, not a wholly clear statement of his purpose, but it is nevertheless deeply moving and it contains a complex of meanings more important by far for the subsequent direction of Bloom's art than do the religious pictures. Here, for the first time, Bloom turns to the most elementary but also the profoundest concern of man: the mystery, tragedy, and beauty of the vital process, the indissoluble skein of living, loving, becoming, and dying. The bride is the central symbol in this complex for in her, lying at a crossroads of existence, is the nexus of all these processes of being. Her infecundation in love is the essence of life, yet her loving is also a sacrifice of the being she was, and a kind of dying. The bride is at once alive and dead and her nuptial bed is also a bier, strewn with flowers that have been born from the consuming of her flesh.

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A second version of the *Bride*, painted in 1943–45 (collection Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger), demonstrates Bloom's characteristic evolution in the development and transformation of a theme. Here his idea is conveyed in an image less symbolic, and more human and actual than before. This *Bride* deals not with the whole complex of concepts about the vital process but with its core, the sense of mutation that is the essence of existence. The second *Bride* is a poetic seizing of the sensation of passage through an acutely poignant and meaningful moment of time. She is a web of feelings, images, and memories that shift and shimmer within her as she wafts, transfixed and spiritualized, across the threshold of a new life. Here the painting, drawing its form from the meaning it contains, is the very opposite of the contemporary version of the *Jew with Torah*; the *Bride* is as intimate and tender in its web of light and rhythm as the *Jew* is broad and forceful.

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The *Child in the Garden* (collection Ralph Coburn) is concurrent in execution with the second *Bride* and is an unfolding in yet another direction of the same basic theme. Bloom had been seeking an image on which to build a painting of birth and regeneration and found it—symptomatic of his tendency to move, with each theme, increasingly toward reality—in a newspaper photo of a child at an orphanage party. The little figure that Bloom has transposed into his picture stands very still in his paper party hat and party clothes and looks at us with an undefinable and unforgettable mixture of sad knowledge and of hope. He stands in a latticework arbor that blazes with summer light and brilliant foliage, and beneath him is a shining pool. The image carries a symbolism that emerges almost of itself and which mingles its ideal power with the poetry of the apparent theme. The child in the radiant arbor is the oldest of Christian symbols, the infant in the shining *mandorla*, and the pool that gives back his image is the ancient symbol of baptism and rebirth. Like the bride, the child in this image of birth, or rebirth, of a being is on the threshold of an existence. Despite his mysterious sad knowledge it is the radiance of hope that emanates from the child and suffuses all his world.

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Such a translation of emotional sensation into vibrating light had been almost Bloom's primary artistic premise: it is the essential device in his first personal pictures, and conspicuously in the *Synagogue*. From this picture Bloom had experimentally extracted, as early as 1941, one of its motives that dealt wholly with the problem of painting light, the *Chandelier*. The complete realization of the possibilities of this theme had to wait for the development of the complete virtuosity of technique that distinguishes such pictures as the *Child in the Garden*. The *Chandelier* of 1943–44 (collection Jean Deering) is of exceptional force and brilliance in handling; the painter has transmuted the visual actuality into a profound luminous excitement. The style of this picture is consistent with the *Child in the Garden*, but its artistic genesis is the reverse. In the *Child* an idea

and an emotion not specifically pictorial have been translated into pictorial terms of light; here a purely visual experience becomes the source of an exalted emotion.

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A further version of the *Chandelier* (collection Stanley J. Wolf, 1945) is, in the manner of Bloom's development on a theme, less passionate than the version of 1943–44; it is brighter, more deliberately articulated and more monumentally composed. The last *Chandelier* is Bloom's finest decoration, magnificently controlled in the manipulation of design and color yet, within this discipline, vibrantly alive in every part. This is Bloom's most "painterly" picture, of unmatchable virtuosity among contemporary works of art.

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The approach at the basis of this group of works, in which emotion is derived from visual sensation, led Bloom in 1945 into experiments in the dominant contemporary trend of abstract art. Between 1945 and 1948 Bloom produced, in the slow, deliberate way that is characteristic of him, a series of four abstract pictures. These paintings all start in some experience of vision, induced often by the singular effects of form, light, and color of minerals or antique glass, but these sensations are translated wholly by the artist into a nonrepresentational pictorial scheme. The complex of movement, color, texture, and effects of luminescence is more intricate and various and more carefully calculated than in most contemporary abstractions. The involved pictorial experience in the *Treasure Maps* is, in a sense, a substitute for the enrichment through emotions and ideas that is usual in Bloom's representational paintings.

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Bloom's concern with abstraction from 1945 to 1948 may be regarded as an extension to a logical extreme of a possibility inherent in one aspect of his style. The abstractions may also have been a nearly necessary relief from a concurrent development, also to an extreme, of the exactly opposite, humanly expressive, potential

of his art. The expressive idea that Bloom began to exploit in 1945 was still part of his concern with the vital process of humanity that he had stated first, four years before, in one interwoven complex in the early *Bride*. In 1945, in the context of a world then long and wearily at war, it was inevitable that from the complex of the vital processes death should emerge as the dominant fact of man's experience. It was not only the tragedy of a world at war that made death loom out so large but also, within that tragedy, the now nearly accomplished extermination of the Jews of Europe, among whom Bloom had his own remembered origins. Confronted with a world in which death seemed the most urgent human verity, Bloom turned with profound moral and emotional directness, and with a rare courage, to the representation of death.

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Though they were engendered within a specific historical situation, Bloom's paintings of death are universal in their idea. The first two of these pictures, painted in 1945, are a monumental pair, one of an aged female, the other of a male corpse. The figures lie upright in their frames, naked and decaying, hideous and piteous at once. They are the ugly, common dead, the unclaimed relicts of the charity wards whose bodies wait for the dissecting knife. The initial shock these figures make upon the spectator is of almost intolerable violence; there is nothing in our experience of art—not Grosz, Rembrandt, nor Grunewald—that quite prepares us for this.

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If we have something like the courage of the artist, and can look again, we begin to see in these images what the artist has seen and knows in them. These dead inspire a fascinated and anguished horror; and they demand at the same time our profoundest pity. They are starkly, mournfully ugly, yet of a singular and terrible dignity. Their decay sickens, but it manifests itself in a perverse coloristic beauty. No other images in art strike so deeply into the basic emotions provoked by the contemplation of death, or exploit in so poignant a way the ambivalences that are at the core not only

of this, but of all our most fundamental feelings. None but a wholly modern personality could paint an experience as inward and as complex as this; this is a pictorial counterpart to modern man's new exploration and knowledge of his inner self—and it is hardly less difficult to digest. Or would be, if it were not that with each renewed experience of these pictures we become less susceptible to their specifically illustrative matter and more aware of the measure in which idea and visual sensation both have been expressed in terms of sheer painting. More completely even than in the second *Bride*, or the *Child in the Garden*, the *Corpses* become an experience of radiance of color, here more somber, but no less magical in effect, and of alternations of dynamic with intimately complex rhythms. The beauty of the painting in a sense absorbs the subject matter into itself, and it is only then, when we have come to see the content through, and in terms of the painting, that its fullest and final meaning comes clear. That meaning retains all our initial sensations of anguish, horror, and pity at death, but it includes now what is also an exaltation and a triumph over death. Decay is transmuted into a living radiance, and the vital process, the endless mutation of matter, continues with a troubling beauty after death. Here too is a response to the problem of man's mortality that is possible only to a personality of our time.

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As with Bloom's other themes, variants and developments have emerged from the theme of the *Corpses*. The *Leg* (collection Glenway Westcott), also of 1945, is a concentration into sharper and more limited compass of the idea and style of the two large pictures. The *Harpies* (collection George Kennedy), painted in 1946–47, explores a tangent concept, more pessimistic than the *Corpses*. This is an allegory, enacted upon the body, of the psychic situation of man in the modern world: lacerated, devoured, and killed by a multitude of swooping evils—the Prometheus of our tormented times. And, unlike in the death of the body, there is no hint here of hope or of regeneration.

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Bloom has shown no new pictures since 1948. The way in which he works precludes swift and facile production. He has been working on a number of canvases which are approaching completion, but none will be seen until he is satisfied that each as nearly as possible fulfills his complex and exacting aims. What Bloom has achieved already, in the first decade of his artistic maturity, marks him as of the first importance among American artists, and as one of those who are making our production in painting of more than only American significance. Bloom's art is more than American in any case; more than with most Americans his heritage of Europe is close and perceptible. His deep sense of the poetry and the tragedy of human destiny seem the fruit of an older culture than our own. Bloom's personality and his art make a bridge between two worlds. What we encounter on this bridge is the profound and poignant image of the humanity of our whole contemporary world.

*William Troy*

# VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE NOVEL OF SENSIBILITY

*Three commentaries: 1932, 1937, 1952*
*—a twenty-year development of*
*a critical attitude*

*Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; but* a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope *surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.*

I

Not only in rhythm and tone but also in the imponderable vagueness of its diction this statement has a familiar ring to the modern ear. The phrases in italics alone are sufficient to suggest its proper order and place in contemporary thought. For if this is not the exact voice of Henri Bergson, it is at least a very successful imitation. Dropped so casually by Mrs. Woolf in the course of a dissertation on the art of fiction, such a statement really implies an acceptance of a whole theory of metaphysics. Behind it lies all that resistance to the naturalistic formula, all that enthusiastic surrender to the world of flux and individual intuition, which has constituted the influence of Bergson on the art and literature of the past thirty years. Whether Mrs. Woolf was affected by this influence directly, or through the medium of Proust or some other secondary source, is not very important. The evidence is clear enough in her work that the fundamental view of reality on which it is based derives from what was

the most popular ideology of her generation. What is so often regarded as unique in her fiction is actually less the result of an individual attitude than of the dominant metaphysical bias of a whole generation.

For members of that generation concerned with fiction the philosophy of flux and intuition offered a relief from the cumbersome technique and mechanical pattern of naturalism. (Against even such mild adherents to the doctrine as Wells and Bennett Mrs. Woolf raised the attack in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.*) Moreover, the new philosophy opened up sources of interest for the novel which allowed it to dispense with whatever values such writers as George Eliot and Henry James had depended on in a still remoter period. Like naturalism, it brought with it its own version of an aesthetic; it supplied a medium which involved no values other than the primary one of self-expression. Of course one cannot wholly ignore the helpful co-operation of psychoanalysis. But to distinguish between the metaphysical and the psychological origins of the new techniques is not a profitable task. It is not difficult to understand how the subjective novel could have derived its assumptions from the one field, its method from the other. And the fusion between them had been completed by the time Mrs. Woolf published her little pamphlet. Everybody, in Rebecca West's phrase, was "doing" a novel in the period immediately following the World War. Everybody, that is to say, was writing a quasi-poetic rendition of his sensibility in a form which it was agreed should be called the novel.

Possessing a mind schooled in abstract theory, especially alert to the intellectual novelties of her own time, Mrs. Woolf was naturally attracted by a method which in addition to being contemporary offered so much to the speculative mind. But the deeper causes of the attraction, it is now evident, were embedded in Mrs. Woolf's own temperament or sensibility. The subjective mode is the only mode especially designed for temperaments immersed in their own sensibility, obsessed with its movements and vacillations, fascinated by its instability. It was the only mode possible for someone like Proust; it was alone capable of projecting the sensibility which because it has remained so uniform throughout her work we may be permitted to

call Mrs. Woolf's own. Here it happens to be Bernard, in *The Waves*, speaking:

> A space was cleared in my mind. I saw through the thick leaves of habit. Leaning over the gate I regretted so much litter, so much unaccomplishment and separation, for one cannot cross London to see a friend, life being so full of engagements; nor take ship to India and see a naked man spearing fish in blue water. I said life had been imperfect, an unfinished phrase. It had been impossible for me, taking snuff as I do from any bagman met in a train, to keep coherency—that sense of the generations, of women carrying red pitchers to the Nile, of the nightingale who sings among conquests and migrations . . .

But this might be almost any one of Mrs. Woolf's characters; and from such a passage we can appreciate how perfectly the subjective or "confessional" method is adapted to the particular sensibility reflected throughout her work.

And if we require in turn some explanation for this hieratic cultivation of the sensibility, we need only examine for a moment the nature and quality of the experience represented by most of her characters. From *The Voyage Out* to *The Waves* Mrs. Woolf has written almost exclusively about one class of people, almost one might say one type of individual, and that a class or type whose experience is largely vicarious, whose contacts with actuality have been for one or another reason incomplete, unsatisfactory, or inhibited. Made up of poets, metaphysicians, botanists, water-colorists, the world of Mrs. Woolf is a kind of superior Bohemia, as acutely refined and aristocratic in its way as the world of Henry James, except that its inhabitants concentrate on their sensations and impressions rather than on their problems of conduct. (Such problems, of course, do not even exist for them since they rarely allow themselves even the possibility of action.) Life for these people, therefore, is painful less for what it has done to them than for what their excessive sensitivity causes them to make of it. Almost every one of them is the victim of some vast and inarticulate fixation: Mrs. Dalloway on Peter Walsh, Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* on Mrs. Ramsay, everyone in *The Waves* on Percival. All of them, like Neville in the last-named book, are listening for "that wild hunting-song

Percival's music." For all of them what Percival represents is something lost or denied, something which must remain forever outside the intense circle of their own renunciation. No consolation is left them but solitude, a timeless solitude in which to descend to a kind of self-induced Nirvana. "Heaven be praised for solitude!" cries Bernard toward the close of *The Waves*. "Heaven be praised for solitude that has removed the pressure of the eye, the solicitation of the body, and all need of lies and phrases." Through solitude these people are able to relieve themselves with finality from the responsibilities of living, they are able to complete their divorce from reality even to the extent of escaping the burden of personality. Nothing in Mrs. Woolf's work serves as a better revelation of her characters as a whole than these ruminations of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*:

> To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness . . . When life sank down for a moment, *the range of experience seemed limitless*. . . . Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity . . .

What Mrs. Ramsay really means to say is that when life sinks down in this manner the range of *implicit* experience is limitless. Once one has abandoned the effort to act upon reality, either with the will or the intellect, the mind is permitted to wander in freedom through the stored treasures of its memories and impressions, following no course but that of fancy or simple association, murmuring Pillicock sat on Pillicock's Hill or Come away, come away, Death, "mingling poetry and nonsense, floating in the stream." But experience in this sense is something quite different from experience in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood in referring to people in life or in books. It does not involve that active impact of character upon reality which provides the objective materials of experience in both literature and life. And if it leads to its own peculiar triumphs, it does so only through a dread of being and doing, an abdication of personality and a shrinking into the solitary darkness.

Because of this self-imposed limitation of their experience, therefore, the characters of Mrs. Woolf are unable to *function* anywhere but on the single plane of the sensibility. On this plane alone is enacted whatever movement, drama, or tragedy occurs in her works. The movement of course is centrifugal, the drama unrealized, the tragedy hushed. The only truly dramatic moments in these novels are significantly enough precisely those in which the characters seem now and again to catch a single brief glimpse of that imposing world of fact which they have forsworn. The scenes we remember best are those like the one in *Mrs. Dalloway* in which the heroine, bright, excited and happy among the guests at her party, is brought suddenly face to face with the fact of death. Or like the extremely moving one at the end of *To the Lighthouse* in which Lily Briscoe at last breaks into tears and cries aloud the hallowed name of Mrs. Ramsay. In such scenes Mrs. Woolf is excellent; no living novelist can translate these nuances of perception in quite the same way; and their effect in her work is of an occasional transitory rift in that diaphanous "envelope" with which she surrounds her characters from beginning to end.

For the novelist of sensibility the most embarrassing of all problems, of course, has been the problem of form. From Richardson to Mrs. Woolf it has been the problem of how to reconcile something that is immeasurable, which is what experience as *feeling* very soon becomes, with something that is measured and defined, which has remained perhaps our most elementary conception of art. In the eighteenth century the impulse toward reconciliation was undoubtedly less acute than it has become today: Richardson and Sterne were working in a medium which did not yet make serious pretensions to being opposed to poetry and drama as a distinct form. There was not yet a Flaubert or a Tolstoy, a Turgenev or a Henry James. Feeling was enough; and feeling was allowed to expand in volumes whose uncontrollable bulk was an eloquent demonstration of its immeasurability. But when at the turn of the present century, under distinguished philosophical auspices, feeling was restored to the novel, when the sensibility finally triumphed over the floundering nineteenth-century Reason, no such artistic insouciance was

possible for anyone at all conscious of the literary tradition. In Proust we see the attempt to achieve form on a large scale through the substitution of a purely metaphysical system for the various collapsing frameworks of values—religious, ethical, and scientific—on which the fiction of the nineteenth century had depended. In Joyce it is through a substitution of quite a different kind, that of a particular myth from the remote literary past, that the effort is made to endow the treasures of the sensibility with something like the *integritas* of the classical aestheticians. And in the case of Mrs. Woolf, who is in this respect representative of most of the followers of these two great contemporary exemplars, the pursuit of an adequate form has been a strenuous one from first to last.

In her earliest two books, to be sure, this strain is not too clearly apparent. But *The Voyage Out*, although an interesting novel in many respects, is notably deficient in what we usually designate as narrative appeal. In retrospect the excellence of the dialogue, the skill with social comedy, the objective portraiture of character—all traditional elements which Mrs. Woolf has since chosen to discard—seem remarkable. But already one can observe a failure or reluctance to project character through a progressive representation of motives, which provides the structure in such a novelist as Jane Austen, for example, whom Mrs. Woolf happens to resemble most in this novel. For an ordered pattern of action unfolding in time Mrs. Woolf substitutes a kind of spatial unity (the setting is a yacht at sea and later a Portuguese hotel), a cadre, so to speak, within which everything—characters, scenes, and ideas—tends to remain fixed and self-contained. This would be an altogether true description if it were not for the promise of some larger development in the love affair that emerges at the end. But even here, in Mrs. Woolf's first novel, no fulfillment is allowed; death is invoked; death supplies a termination which might not otherwise be reached since none is inherent in the plan. *Night and Day* is an effort to write a novel on a thoroughly conventional model, and the result is so uncertain that we can understand the rather sudden turning to a newer method. It is as if Mrs. Woolf had persuaded herself by these experiments (how consciously we may judge from her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*) that her view

of personality did not at all coincide with the formal requirements of the conventional novel. Of course she was not alone in this discovery for there already existed the rudiments of a new tradition, whose main tendency was to dispense with form for the sake of an intensive exploitation of method.

Despite the number of artists in every field who assume that an innovation in method entails a corresponding achievement in form, method cannot be regarded as quite the same thing as form. For the novelist all that we can mean by method is embraced in the familiar phrase "the point of view." As his object is character his only method can be that by which he endeavors to attain to a complete grasp and understanding of that object. "Method" in fiction narrows down to nothing more or less than the selection of a point of view from which character may be studied and presented. The drastic shift in the point of view for which Henry James prepared English fiction has undeniably resulted in many noticeable effects in its form or structure. But it is not yet possible to declare that it has resulted in any *new* form. Dorothy Richardson, in the opening volume of *Pilgrimage*, was among the first to apply this new method but in none of the volumes which followed has she allied it to anything like a consistent form. What Mrs. Woolf absorbed from Miss Richardson, from May Sinclair, and from James Joyce, all of whom had advanced its use before 1918, was therefore only method, and not form. In the collection of sketches called *Monday or Tuesday* Mrs. Woolf definitely announced her affiliation with the new tradition. But such pieces as "Kew Gardens" and "The Mark on the Wall" were so slight in scope that they could make their appeal (like the essays of Lamb, for example) without the aid of any formal order or plan. Not until *Jacob's Room* does Mrs. Woolf attempt to use the method at any length, and in this book, with which her larger reputation began, we can first perceive the nature of the problem suggested by her work.

In one sense, the structure of *Jacob's Room* is that of the simplest form known to storytelling—the chronicle. From its intense pages one is able to detach a bare continuity of events: Jacob goes to the seashore, to Cambridge, to Greece, to the War. But what his creator

is manifestly concerned with is not the relation of these events to his character, but their relation to his sensibility. The latter is projected through a poetic rendering of the dreams, desires, fantasies, and enthusiasms which pass through his brain. The rendering is poetic because it is managed entirely by images, certain of which are recurrent throughout—the sheep's jaw with yellow teeth, "the moors and Byron," Greece. The theme also would seem to be a kind of poetic contrast between the outward passage of events and the permanence of a certain set of images in the mind. It happens that there is enough progression of outward events to give the book about as much movement as any other biographical (or autobiographical) chronicle. But one cannot point to any similar movement, any principle of progressive unity in the revelation of all that implicit life of the hero which makes up the substance of the book. As a sensibility Jacob remains the same throughout; he reacts in an identical fashion to the successive phenomena of his experience. Since he reacts only through his sensibility, since he does not act directly upon experience, he fails to "develop," in the sense in which characters in fiction usually develop. Instead of acting, he responds, and when death puts an end to his response, the book also comes to an end. "What am I to do with these?" his mother asks at the close, holding up an old pair of shoes, and this bit of romantic pathos is all the significance which his rich accumulation of dreams and suffering is made to assume in our minds.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* there is a much more deliberate use of recurrent images to identify the consciousness of each of the characters. The effort is not toward an integration of these images, for that would amount to something which is opposed to Mrs. Woolf's whole view of personality. It is toward no more than the emphasis of a certain rhythm in consciousness, which is obviously intended to supply a corresponding rhythm to the book as a whole. Moreover, in this work use is made for the first time of an enlarged image, a symbol that is fixed, constant, and wholly outside the time-world of the characters. The symbol of Big Ben, since it sets the contrast between physical time and the measureless duration of the characters' inner life, serves as a sort of standard or center of reference. But neither

of these devices, it should be realized, has anything directly to do with the organization of character: rhythm, the rhythm of images in the consciousness, is not the same thing as an order of the personality; the symbol of Big Ben is no real center because it exists outside the characters, is set up in contrast with them. By means of these devices carried over from lyric poetry, a kind of unity is achieved which is merely superficial or decorative, corresponding to no fundamental organization of the experience.

In her next book, however, Mrs. Woolf goes much further toward a fusion of character and design. *To the Lighthouse*, which is probably her finest performance in every respect, owes its success not least to the completeness with which the symbol chosen is identified with the will of every one of the characters. The lighthouse is the common point toward which all their desires are oriented; it is an object of attainment or fulfillment which gives direction to the movements of their thought and sensibility; and since it is thus associated with them it gives a valid unity to the whole work. Moreover, alone among Mrs. Woolf's works, *To the Lighthouse* has for its subject an action, a single definite action, "going to the lighthouse," which places it clearly in the realm of narrative. In fact, as narrative, it may be even more precisely classified as an *incident*. The sole objection that might be raised on aesthetic grounds is whether Mrs. Woolf's method has not perhaps caused her to extend her development beyond the inherent potentialities of this form. The question is whether such a narrow structure can support the weight of the material and the stress of its treatment. More relevant to the present question, however, is the consideration that so much of the success of the book rests on the unusually happy choice of symbol, one that is very specially adapted to the theme, and not likely to be used soon again. Not many more such symbols occur to the imagination.

Certainly Mrs. Woolf does not make use of the same kind of symbol in her next novel; for in *The Waves* she returns to the devices of rhythm and symbolical contrast on which she depended in her earlier books. (*Orlando* is not a novel, but a "biography," and has only to follow a simple chronological order. Whatever hilarious variations its author plays on the traditional concept of time do not

affect her adherence to this simple order.) In *The Waves* Mrs. Woolf again presents her characters through the rhythm of images in the brain, again bases her structure on a contrast between these and a permanent symbol of the objective world. There is, first of all, the image or set of images which serves as a motif for each of the characters; for Louis, a chained beast stamping on the shore, for Bernard, the willow tree by the river; for Neville, "that wild hunting-song, Percival's music." And also there is the cumulative image of each of their lives taken as a whole set in a parallel relationship to the movements of the sea.

Such a parallel, of course, is not an unfamiliar one. "Dwellers by the sea cannot fail to be impressed by the sight of its ceaseless ebb and flow," remarks Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, "and are apt . . . to trace a subtle relation, a secret harmony, between its tides and the life of man." What is unique is Mrs. Woolf's effort to expand what is usually no more than an intuition, a single association, a lyrical utterance to the dimensions of a novel. In one sense this is accomplished by a kind of multiplication: we are given six lyric poets instead of the usual one. For what Mrs. Woolf offers is a rendering of the subjective response to reality of six different people at successive stages in their lives. We are presented to them in childhood, adolescence, youth, early and late middle age. "*The waves broke on the shore*" is the last line in the book, and from this we are probably to assume that at the close they are all dead. Such a scheme has the order of a chronicle, of a group of parallel biographies, but Mrs. Woolf is much more ambitious. Each period in her characters' lives corresponds to a particular movement of the sea; the current of their lives at the end is likened to its "incessant rise and fall and rise and fall again." In addition, the different periods correspond to the changing position of the sun in the sky on a single day, suggesting a vision of human lives *sub specie aeternitatis*. (The ancillary images of birds, flowers, and wind intensify the same effect.) The theme is best summed up by one of the characters in a long monologue at the end: "Let us again pretend that life is a solid substance, shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers. Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story, so that when one matter is despatched—

love for instance—we go on, in an orderly manner to the next. I was saying there was a willow tree. Its shower of falling branches, its creased and crooked bark had the effect of what remains outside our illusions yet cannot stay them, is changed by them for the moment, yet shows through stable, still, with a sternness that our lives lack. Hence the comment it makes; the standard it supplies, the reason why, as we flow and change, it seems to measure." In conception and form, in method and style, this book is the most poetic which Mrs. Woolf has yet written. It represents the extreme culmination of the method to which she has applied herself exclusively since *Monday or Tuesday*. It is significant because it forces the question whether the form in which for her that method has resulted is not essentially opposed to the conditions of narrative art.

But this form is unmistakably that of the extended or elaborated lyric; and criticism of these novels gets down ultimately to the question with what impunity one can confuse the traditional means of one literary form with the traditional means of another. This is no place to undertake another discussion of the difference between poetry and prose—or, more particularly, the difference between the lyrical and the narrative. It is a difference which we immediately recognize, and which criticism has always rightly recognized, even when it has not been altogether certain of its explanations. The least sensible of these explanations has undoubtedly been that which would make us believe that the difference between them is *qualitative*—that poetry deals with different things from prose, with the implication that the things of poetry are of a higher order than those of prose. This is a snobbery which, fortunately in one sense, has been pretty well removed in our time, although unfortunately in another it has led to a different kind of confusion. And this is the confusion which consists in removing any *formal* distinctions between the two modes.

The objection to the lyrical method in narrative is that it renders impossible the peculiar kind of interest which the latter is designed to supply. By the lyrical method is meant the substitution of a group of symbols for the orderly working-out of a motive or a set of motives which has constituted the immemorial pattern of narrative

art. Perhaps the simplest definition of symbols is that they are things used to stand for other things; and undoubtedly the most important part of such a definition is the word "stand." Whatever operations of the imagination have gone on to produce them, symbols themselves become fixed, constant, and static. They may be considered as the end-results of the effort of the imagination to fix itself somewhere in space. The symbol may be considered as something *spatial*. Symbols are thus ordinarily used in lyric poetry, where the effort is to fix ideas, sentiments, or emotions. By themselves, of course, symbols in poetry are no more than so many detached, isolated, and unrelated points in space. When projected separately, as in the poetry of the Imagist school, or in too great confusion, as in much contemporary poetry, they do not possess any necessary meaning or value to the intelligence: the worlds that they indicate are either too small or too large to live in. Moreover, whether separate or integrated into a total vision symbols are capable of being grasped, like any other objects of space, by a single and instantaneous effort of perception. The interval of time between their presentation and our response to them is ideally no longer than the time required for our reading of a poem. Even when their presentation is like a gradual exfoliation, as in certain poems by Donne and Baudelaire, for example, that time is never allowed to be too greatly prolonged. We do not require Poe's axiom that all lyrics must be brief to understand why they must be so. The symbols on which they are constructed can be perceived in a moment of time.

When narrative based itself on a simple chronological record of action, it was assured of a certain degree of interest. When, later, it based itself on an arrangement of action which corresponded to an orderly view of life or reality, it attained to the very high interest of a work of art. As long as it based itself firmly on action according to one pattern or another, it was certain of some degree of interest. To understand the nature of the satisfaction which we seem to take in the representation of reality in a temporal order we should have to know more about certain primitive elements of our psychology than science has yet been able to discover. It is enough to recognize that whatever the reasons this satisfaction is rooted in our sense of *time*.

It is enough to realize that this is the basis of the appeal which narrative has made through the whole history of fiction, from the earliest fables of the race to the most complex "constructions" of Henry James. For this reason, for example, description has always occupied a most uncertain place in fiction. Description, which deals with things rather than events, interposes a space-world in the march of that time-world which is the subject of fiction. For this reason the use of poetic symbols in fiction, as in all Mrs. Woolf's work since *Monday or Tuesday*, seems to be in direct contradiction to the foundations of our response to that form.

Because it is in an almost continuous state of moral and intellectual relaxation that Mrs. Woolf's characters draw out their existence, they can be projected only through a more or less direct transcription of their consciousness. Such a qualification is necessary, however, for the method here is rarely if ever as direct as that of Joyce or his followers. Between the consciousness and the rendition of it there is nearly always interposed a highly artificial literary style. This style remains practically uniform for all the characters; it is at once individual and traditional. The effect of its elegant diction and elaborately turned periods is to make one feel at times as if these sad and lonely people were partly compensated for the vacuity of their lives by the gift of casting even their most random thoughts in the best literary tradition. For some of them, like Bernard in *The Waves* (or is it the author herself speaking?), language is more than a compensation; it has an absolute value in itself: "A good phrase, however, seems to me to have an independent existence." Others may go to religion, to art, to friendship, but Mrs. Woolf's people more often than not go "to seek among phrases and fragments something unbroken." It is as if they seek to net the world of time and change with a phrase, to retrieve the chaos with words. For this reason the presentation of character by Mrs. Woolf gets down finally to a problem of style, to the most beautiful arrangement of beautiful words and phrases.

Here also Mrs. Woolf is pre-eminently the poet; for as an unwillingness to use motives and actions led to her substitution of poetic

symbols in their stead so is she also compelled to use a metaphorical rather than a narrative style. In this practice of course she is not without precedent; other novelists have relied on metaphor to secure their finest effects of communication. But while such effects are ordinarily used to heighten the narrative, they are never extended to the point where they assume an independent interest. In Mrs. Woolf's books metaphorical writing is not occasional but predominant; from the beginning it has subordinated every other kind; and it was inevitable that it should one day be segmented into the purely descriptive prose-poems of *The Waves*.

No sooner is the essentially poetic character of this writing admitted than one is confronted with the whole host of problems associated with the general problem of imagery in poetry. It happens, however, that the peculiar use of imagery in Mrs. Woolf's prose suggests among other things a particular distinction, and one which has not been often enough made, although it was recognized by both Coleridge and Baudelaire, a distinction between two kinds of sensibility.

Of the two kinds of sensibility that we can identify in examining works of poetry the first would seem to be incapable of receiving impressions except through the prism of an already acquired set of language symbols. It is as if poets with this type of sensibility are uncontrollably *determined* in the kind of response they can make to reality. And because they are so determined in their initial response they are determined also in their manner of expression. The original language-symbols, acquired through culture, training, or unconscious immersion in some tradition, are infinitely perpetuated in their writing. At its worst such writing is anemic and invertebrate, like the minor verse of any period or like the earlier work of many excellent poets. In such verse the language gives the effect of having occasioned the feeling more often than the feeling the language. At its most sophisticated, however, this verse is capable of achieving a certain superficial quality of distinction all its own. It is a quality of distinction undoubtedly made possible by the reduced effort to discover precise images to convey very definite and particular sensations or emotions. It may consist in the pure musicalization of language through the draining of all specific content from the

imagery that we find in Mallarmé or (on a lower plane) in Swinburne. Or it may consist in that plastic manipulation of surfaces which is another department of the interesting verse of any period. The effect in either case is the same, that of a resuscitation rather than a re-creation of language.

The other type of sensibility, of course, is in the habit of receiving direct impressions, of forming images which possess the freshness, uniqueness, and body of the original object. It has the faculty of creating new language-symbols to convey what it has perceived or, as sometimes happens, of re-creating traditional symbols with enough force to make them serve again. (For used symbols are capable of being recharged, so to speak, under the pressure of the new emotion they are called upon to convey.) Only when the original perception is solid and clear is it able to crystallize into images capable of transmitting emotion; and only when the emotion is adequate are these images capable of creating or re-creating language. The difference is between language which is made its own object and language which is made to realize emotion by evoking particular objects of concrete experience. It is the difference between writing which secures a certain effectiveness through being recognizable in a particular tradition and writing which is an exact verbal equivalent for a precise emotion or set of emotions. It is the difference, among the writers of our time, between Sara Teasdale and Marianne Moore, or between Stephen Crane and Thomas Wolfe. And in the most characteristic lines of the best writers of any time it is this latter kind of sensibility that we can see at work. We see it in Antony's rebuke to Cleopatra:

I found you as a morsel, cold upon
Dead Caesar's trencher

or in Baudelaire's

J'ai cherché dans l'amour un sommeil oublieux;
Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles

or in Yeats'

I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundations of a house, or where
Tree, like a sooty finger, starts from the earth.

In prose fiction, when the language approaches the precision and density of poetry, it is a result of the same necessity on the part of author or character, under stress of exceptional feeling, to seize upon his experience for the particular image or images necessary to express his state. The only difference is that the images of fiction are likely to be less remote, less "difficult" perhaps, than those of poetry. And the reason of course is that the images are likely to arise out of the immediate background of the novel. No better example of this can be offered than in the speech in *Wuthering Heights* in which Catherine, in her delirium, shakes the feathers out of her pillow:

> That's a turkey's . . . and this is a wild duck's; and this is a pigeon's. Ah, they put pigeons' feathers in the pillows—no wonder I couldn't die! . . . And here is a moor-cock's; and this—I should know it among a thousand—it's a lapwing's. Bonny bird; wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor. It wanted to get to its nest, for the clouds had touched the swells, and it felt rain coming.

In Mrs. Woolf's novels, as replete with imagery as they are, the effect is never quite the same as in this passage from Emily Brontë. The images that pass through in her characters' minds are rarely seized from any *particular* background of concrete experience. There are few of them which we have not encountered somewhere before. They belong not so much to the particular character as to the general tradition of literature. The effect is of an insidious infiltration of tradition into the sensibility. And this effect is the same whether it is a straight description by the author, as in *To the Lighthouse*:

> The autumn trees, ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral caves where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle and how bones bleach and burn far away on Indian sands. The autumn trees gleam in the yellow moonlight, in the light of harvest moons, the light which mellows the energy of labour, and smooths the stubble, and brings the wave lapping blue to the shore.

or a presentation of mood, as in *Mrs. Dalloway*:

> Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking.

or a translation of ecstasy, as in *The Waves*:

> Now tonight, my body rises tier upon tier like some cool temple whose floor is strewn with carpets and murmurs rise and the altars stand smoking; but up above, here in my serene head, come only fine gusts of melody, waves of incense, while the lost dove wails, and the banners tremble above tombs, and the dark airs of midnight shake trees outside the open windows.

From such examples it should be apparent to what extent the sensibility here is haunted by the word-symbols of the past. The consciousness of each of these characters is a Sargasso Sea of words, phrases, broken relics of poetry and song. The phrases which rise to the surface are like bright shells resonant with the accumulated echoes of their past histories. Some of them have the familiar charm of cherished heirlooms; only a few retain completely whatever power to stir the imagination they may once have had. Almost all of them depend for their effect on their associations to the cultivated mind rather than on their ability to evoke the fullness and immediacy of concrete experience. And the reason of course is that there is insufficient experience of this sort anywhere reflected in the course of Mrs. Woolf's work.

It is also clear in such passages how Mrs. Woolf has come more and more to cultivate language for its own sake, to seek in phrases some "independent existence" which will give them an absolute beauty in themselves. But detached from experience as they are they attain to no more substantial beauty than that of a charming virtuosity of style. It is not the beauty but the cleverness of Mrs. Woolf's writing which is responsible for the final effect on the reader. "No woman before Virginia Woolf has used our language with such easy authority," wrote the late Sara Teasdale. Indeed few writers of either sex have written English with the same mastery of traditional resources, the same calculated effectiveness, the same facility. And when this facile traditionalism is allied with an appropriate subject, as in a frank burlesque like *Orlando*, the result is truly brilliant. It is only when it is used as the vehicle for significant serious thoughts and emotions, as in the larger portion of Mrs. Woolf's work, that its charm seems false, its authority invalid, and its beauty sterile.

It is only fair to point out what would seem to be a sincere self-questioning in the long monologue at the end of *The Waves*. Bernard, the inveterate phrasemonger, recalling the scene in which he and his friends first heard of Percival's death, remembers that they had compared him to a lily. "So the sincerity of the moment passed," Bernard cries, "so it had become symbolical; and that I could not stand. Let us commit any blasphemy of laughter and criticism rather than exude this lily-sweet glue; and cover him over with phrases." Perhaps it is too much to read into this lapse into sincerity on the part of a single character a confession of dissatisfaction by the author with the kind of language that she has been using all along in her work. But while such an interpretation may be too eager there is at least the implication that she is aware that reality when it is encountered is something far too important to be covered over with beautiful phrases. The vague hope is thrown out that in her later work she may finally be tempted to give us Percival himself, that she may spare him from death and allow him a more solid existence than he ever enjoyed in the minds and memories of his friends.

But no sooner is this idea expressed than one is reminded of the profound changes that would have to happen in Mrs. Woolf's whole metaphysical outlook before any such hope could be realized. For every element of her work that we have considered—her form, her method of characterization, her style even—is affected by the same fundamental view of personality at its root. These elements of form and of style can hardly be expected to change as long as the view which determines them remains unchanged. And nothing in Mrs. Woolf's recent work, it must be admitted, justifies the belief that this view is likely to be changed in the near future.

1932

II

By this time so little that is fundamental remains to be said of the merits or limitations of Mrs. Woolf's narrative method that a review of her novel *The Years*, which is a reshuffling of elements already familiar to all readers of her work, is doomed to the same sort of repetitiousness from which that work itself has for some time

suffered. Her admirers, writing in a style too suspiciously like her own to be altogether convincing, will revive the phrases about the beauty and the distinction and the ultimate truth to life of everything that Mrs. Woolf has written. And a few others, still disturbed by the persistence of these claims, will take the trouble to point out that each of them is capable of a little more exact definition—particularly the reference to the truth about life. They will doubtless protest that what we probably get in these distinguished novels is not so much life as a special vision of a special kind of life—a vision, moreover, that has been largely created, nurtured, and corroborated by the conditions of this life. "We receive but what we give," in Coleridge's well-known formula; and if Mrs. Woolf's impression of the years is what it is, it may be only because she has superimposed on them an impression that was, in the first place, the kind of impression that the Ramsays, the Pargiters, and the rest were forced to draw from their own experience. From this maddening shuttle of cause and effect, the rankest of determinisms, we are never released through that vigorous act of imagination by which the writer attempts to transcend the limiting conditions of his materials: the deep voice of Coleridge mumbling of the fusion of "*sum*ject" and "*oom*ject" is stilled like everything else by the resounding waters of time. So also in the set pieces of beautiful writing—precisely distributed here at the beginning of each of those divisions by which the immeasurable is arbitrarily measured—what we get thrown back at us, in this charming evocation of a summer day, this clever impersonation of a March wind, are images and words and phrases so hoarily incrusted in the characters' collective consciousness that nothing really fresh is added to our perception. And it is undoubtedly the total effect of language of this sort that is referred to by the somewhat vague term distinction. It is now apparent that final evaluation of Mrs. Woolf's work must revolve monotonously around the question of the experience and the attitude toward experience of her typical characters. This is a standard imposed by her faithful refusal to oppose any attitude of her own by which we can measure them within the perspective of her work. And it is, needless to say, a standard that cannot be very successfully applied beyond a certain point.

Either these people will be found to glow with a still potent charm of well-bred sensitivity or they will emit a most unpleasant smell as of something already quite dead and decayed.

All that is perhaps necessary in this review, therefore, is to consider the reshuffling that has taken place in the light of its possible consequences on the theme. For the book is of course another celebration of the flux, another slow passage down the most traversed river in modern fiction, another extended prose gloss on *Eheu fugaces, anni labuntur*. But where in *Jacob's Room* and *Orlando* the theme was rendered in terms of a single individual, and where in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* the period covered was relatively short, we have here a chronicle of a whole typical middle-class English family, with their accumulating host of relatives and friends, from 1880 to the present. Such distinctions should not, however, be stressed too much; for in *The Waves* also Mrs. Woolf was concerned with tracing the destinies of a group of people over the whole course of their lives. The great difference would be that for the first time she is trying to maintain something like a balance between the outer and the inner reality, between the public and the personal, between the mechanical ticking of Big Ben and the sound of time's passing in the mind's ear. In this effort she has returned somewhat to the form and style of her very earliest novels; she has adopted a simple chronological order; and she has practically put a stop to the direction which reached its climax in *The Waves*.

The most immediate changes to be observed will be in fact the reduction of those prolonged subjective improvisations that have been so much admired in all Mrs. Woolf's more recent novels. From another point of view of course, this shift to a neater, more rapid, less mannered style will be welcomed. It promises, at least at the beginning, a corresponding modification of other important things—most notably the conception of human character as little more than a highly sensitized instrument for registering impressions. But this is unfortunately a promise that recedes in exact proportion to the characters' uniform failure, through the unfolding years, to exhibit anything resembling moral progress. Time goes on and on, but the Edwards, the Delias, the Eleanors, and the Kittys retain the same

niceties, the same frustrations, the same terror of existence with which they began. All suffer from a malady of will that makes them as inappropriate to the purposes of fiction as to the bustle and dirt of the London streets.

Of all the symbolical scenes in the book none is more symbolical than the one in which a member of the Pargiter clan, looking out from the tastefully furnished room in the slums which she shares with her sister, is made to exclaim: "In time to come . . . people, looking into this room—this cave, this little antre, scooped out of mud and dung, will hold their fingers to their noses"—she held her fingers to her nose—"and say, 'Pah! They stink!'" With characters possessing such a view of themselves, Mrs. Woolf is hardly able to do very much that she has not already done, with consummate perfection, in the past. The present book merely throws into new relief the fact that no expansion of scale, no experimentation with method can lend meaning and significance where neither is implicit in the experience. It seems more than ever unlikely that Mrs. Woolf's talents, which are considerable in so many different departments of fiction, will develop to their full measure while she persists in limiting herself to purely formal variations on the same old dirgelike tune.

1937

III

Much of this essay, especially the first section, written some twenty years ago, will inevitably seem dated to most readers today. Since her tragic death Mrs. Woolf's work has found its own secure and appropriate place in the literature of our time. That place has turned out to be neither so small or inconsequential as the prevailing tone here tends to predict, nor is it so large as certain of her admirers and imitators in the 'twenties hoped that it would become. Here again Time, of which no one in her generation in England was more painfully conscious, has altered or at least tempered literary judgment along with everything else. Time has established the balance.

For the pert severity of most of the objections to Mrs. Woolf's novels the only excuse that can be made, apart from the stock and

always irrelevant one of youth, is that they did at the time seem to represent a kind of facile emotionalism and moral attenuation that could spell no good for the novel as a developing art form. But whatever threat they may have offered has long since disappeared; and, as a matter of fact, we are actually inclined to turn back with a certain nostalgia to those very qualities of delicacy and elegance at which we took offense and which have now, alas, almost universally departed from the novel. For example, it now seems undoubtedly a mistake to have raised the hackneyed charge of sterility, to make the frequent confusion between a writer's world and his treatment of it, to assume that because a writer chooses to write about so-called sterile people his own work is thereby necessarily sterile. In rereading the best of Mrs. Woolf's novels, one is today more likely to be impressed by the underlying vigor and zest about the whole essential business of human experience, amounting at moments to ecstasy, as in the closing lines of *To the Lighthouse* when Lily Briscoe turns to the canvas upon which she has been working throughout the book.

> There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.

Yes, we now can recognize that Mrs. Woolf too had her vision, too narrow or special perhaps for most of us to share with patience and sympathy, but her own and authentic. And all that matters is the high and exquisite art by which she was able to render it.

1952

*A section of a long*
*poem now in progress*

Kentucky water, clear spring: a boy fleeing
To waters under the dry Kentucky sun;
His little friends of Nomen with him, seeing
Long shadows of grapevine wriggle and run
Over the green swirl; mullein under the ear
Soft as Nausicaä's palm; sullen fun
Brutal as childhood's thin harmonious tear:
O fountain, bosom source undying-dead,
Replenish me the spring of love and fear
And give me back the eye that looked and fled
When a thrush idling in the tulip tree
Unwound the cold dream of the copperhead.
—Along the creek the road was winding; we
Felt the quicksilver sky. I see again
The five companions of that odyssey:
Bill Eaton, Charlie Watson, "Nigger" Layne
The doctor's son, Harry Dueslér who played
The flute; Tate, with the water on his brain.
Dog-days: the dusty leaves where rain delayed

Hung low on poison-oak and scuppernong,
For we were following the active shade
Of water, that bells and bickers all night long.
"No more'n a mile," Layne said. All five stood still.
Listening, I heard what seemed at first a song;
Peering, I heard the hooves come down the hill.
The posse passed, twelve horse; the leader's face
Was worn as limestone on an ancient sill.
Then, as sleepwalkers shift from a hard place
In bed, and rising to keep a formal pledge
Descend a ladder into empty space,
We scuttled down the bank below a ledge
And marched stiff-legged in our common fright
Along a hog-track by the riffle's edge:
Into a world where sound shaded the sight
Dropped the dull hooves again; the horsemen came
Again, all but the leader. It was night
Momently and I feared: eleven same
Jesus-Christers unmembered and unmade,
Whose Corpse had died again in dirty shame.
The bank then leveling in a speckled glade
We stopped to breathe above the swimming-hole;
I gazed at its reticulated shade
Recoiling in blue fear, and felt it roll
Over my eyes and ears and lift my hair
Like seaweed tossing on a sunk atoll.
I rose again. Borne on the copper air
A distant voice green as a funeral wreath
Against a grave: "That dead nigger there."
The melancholy sheriff slouched beneath
A giant sycamore; shaking his head
He plucked a sassafras twig and picked his teeth:
"We come too late." He spoke to the tired dead
Whose ragged shirt soaked up the viscous flow
Of blood in which It lay discomfited.
A butting horsefly gave one ear a blow

And glanced off, as the sheriff kicked the rope
Loose from the neck and hooked it with his toe
Away from the blood.—I looked back down the slope;
The boys were gone that I had hoped to greet.—
A single horseman came at a fast lope
And pulled up at the hanged man's horny feet;
The sheriff noosed the feet, the other end
The stranger tied to his pommel in a neat
Slip-knot. I saw the Negro's body bend
And straighten, as a fish-line cast transverse
Yields to the current that it must subtend.
The sheriff's God-damn was a facile curse
Not for the dead but for the blinding dust
That boxed the cortège in a cloudy hearse
And dragged it towards our town. I knew I must
Not stay till nightfall in that silent road;
Sliding my bare feet into the warm crust
I hopped the stonecrop like a panting toad
Mouth open, following the heaving cloud
That floated to the courthouse square its load
Of limber corpse that took the sun for shroud.
There were three figures in the dying sun
Whose light were company where three was crowd.
My breath crackled the thin air like a shotgun
As, sheriff and the stranger disappearing,
The faceless head lay still. I could not run
Or walk, but stood. Alone in the public clearing
This private thing was owned by all the town,
Though never claimed by us within my hearing.

*Herbert Gold*

# THE HEART OF THE ARTICHOKE

*A Story*

My father, his horny hands black with sulphur, lit a cigar with a brief, modest, but spectacular one-handed gesture, his thumbnail crr-racking across the blue-headed kitchen match; when he described his first job in America, selling water to the men building the skyscrapers, teetering across the girders for fifteen cents a pail, green flecks fumed and sailed in his yellowish Tartar eyes; he peeled an artichoke with both hands simultaneously, the leaves flying toward his mouth, crossing at the napkin politely tucked at the master juggler's collar, until with a groan that was the trumpet of all satisfaction he attained the heart; he—but he was a man of capabilities, such feats apart.

As my mother said of him before they married, "He's well-off. Lots of personality." Older than the other women of her family, she used the word *well-off* in a primitive sense, to signify a general relationship with the world, not substracting from the term all but its usual financial refrain: "Well-off very, he's a Buick. . ." But she took the word from Aunt Sarah and Aunt Ethel; it's important that the vocabulary derives from economic security, to be extended outward only by an exceptional act of vitality. We, my brothers and

I, could never eat enough for her. "Don't aggravate me. Eat. Eat," she would say.

"We already ate," I pointed out.

"But look at your father!"

He was eating. He ate with silent respect for food, a great deal, and not out of gluttony but with appreciation for his own labor in it. He knew the cost. In each spoonful of soup carried with music to his mouth I heard the winds whistling through the branches of the *knaedloch* trees; I saw the farmers' trucks, laden with chopped liver, musing in his crocodile eyes. "Eat," he pronounced at intervals, assuaging his love for us, "eat, eat."

We ate with a hunger in our bellies or in a filial loyalty while his was in his heart. Wearing a sheepskin coat which came as a gift from Mother and Pitkin's with the no-overhead, a silvery-pronged crate hammer arming his back pocket, he climbed into the cab of his truck before dawn on market days, his wife's lips still parted against their single pillow while he checked off a list measured in gross over a breakfast of liver-and-onions with the other fruitmen in Solly's Market Tearoom. Perhaps at the earlier moment of supper, while we heedlessly digested, carloads of artichokes were coming in at the Food Terminal for the Thursday morning auction. He would get the best for Jack's Food & Vegetable: *The Best is the Best Buy.*

"Always," my mother piously breathed after him. She was proud of his slogan. "He made it up himself one day I remember it, he was by the cooler sorting asparagus. Lots of personality, loads," she informed Aunt Ethel and Aunt Sarah. "Eat," she said to me. "The nice ovenbaked potato."

I once asked the address of the poor hungry man in China who would be glad to finish my potato. "I'll send it to him with Mr. Kennedy the mailman," I suggested.

"I need your backtalk like I need my own brother Morton's agar-agar oil for his constipation. A whole tablespoon," she said. "I need it." Repenting of my sarcasm, I never believed in the poor hungry man, although I had recently become convinced of China at least in Geography.

My father had the knowledge of things—how to hoist an orange

crate in a movement like a dance, how to tell an honest farmer from one who will hide his bad Pascal or Iceberg under bravado and a show of good ones, whom to trust in the fleet meetings of money at a fruit auction; this is already a great deal. Only once was he famously tricked, and by Uncle Morton, a man who installed automatic sprinkling pipes in his lawn ("For show! for the neighbors!" my mother communicated, outraged) but spent his Sundays tightening the faucets and complaining that his daughters filled the bathtub too full. (How clean can you get?)

Well, this brother-in-law, exalted by cupidity in one federally sponsored moment, suggested a partnership in the property in order to eliminate my father's competition at an auction: Should brothers, or almost-brothers, bid each other up like cats and dogs? No, the answer.

Afterwards, the deal secured, my father approached, tendering a hand-rolled cigar fraternally-in-law and saying, "*Nu* Mort, now about the partnership I think well we should let Henry there in the Republic Building, not that Hank from 105th Street, Henry a reliable man Hazelton Hotels uses him, draw up the papers—"

"Partners! hah!" Villainous Uncle Morton, performing for some secret inner croak of applause, permitted himself laughter at such innocence. "I'm partners me only with my wife"—and they haven't spoken since, nor have his daughters and I, cousins all.

But this was real estate, not food, which was the true sphere of my father's power; besides, such an error brings scope and savor to a legend of paternal infallibility. He could say, or let my mother say while above the broad cheekbones his eyes glittered like two long plump lima beans on sidewalk display in the sun: "The only time Jake got it but good, it was that time with the Woodward property, his own brother-in-law my brother, they run a house in the Heights and two cars—they need it?—a Buick sure and a Chevie for Yetta and the kids, may his breath turn sour in his old age—"

And his daughters' too. Amen.

As my mother talked my father measured us from under a vast biblical forehead which had sojourned in Kamenetz-Podolsk; it was a forehead that barely escaped the scars of reprisal for a tradesman's

life given to a man who needed labor in the open air. He wrestled out this frozen compression, these knotty ravages, at the cost of an overquickening in the work of the store, wielding cases with a plunging violence and mounting trucks like a burly fruitstore tomcat. Overhappiness too is a threat, Zarathustra said. The yellow flecks of his long narrow eyes fumed in contemplation. His sons were strange animals, born in America.

Question-shaped, my belly in advance of my thoughts, I had unnoticed by all but myself become skinny, pimply, shrewd, and poetic. I trained myself to wake at dawn, not for work like my father or to drink formula like my youngest brother, but because of the possibility that Pattie Donahue might feel my presence and stir in response to it; I believed in telepathy, tuning in on no messages because no one sent me any. I searched her face during Miss Baxter's Reading and The Library How To Use It for a sign of complicity (received no answer); I never spoke to her, for reasons of shyness and reasons of magic. She had aquarium eyes, profoundly green, profoundly empty, and a mouth like a two-cent Bull's Eye candy, and pale transparent fingers busy as fins. She powdered her nose in public, no longer picking it; she touched her ears to make sure of their presence on the beach of her head; patiently she plucked the angora from her mittens off the front of her cardigan, with this gesture of pale-boned fingers exploring herself and me. Together only abstractly, we were linked by both imagining atrocious ways to wish her well.

I let her swim again in my memory. She considered the future by judging it with the deliberate active forgetfulness of a fish floating asleep under ice: power through patience. Pattie Donahue wanted more than love, more than strength; she wanted mastery in denial, divinity in refusal of her own blood. Up the ladder to godhood or down to fishliness? That was her one risk in life. Seaweed is good for you! Lots of iodine! She had a repertory of head-tuckings, wiggles, peeps, curtsies, suckings, winks, herself charmed by herself; she was crippled for eternity, condemned to increase by parthenogenesis. She could not laugh with her body because her body could never move to another's, sway as it might under the seas of

her ambition. Bemused, pious, she granted herself an adoring hand, fingers straddling to squeeze her sweater at the root of milk and psychology. Recall that princess who could undress before a slave because she did not regard him as a human being? We are all sometimes slaves.

Slavishly I kneeled for her chamois penwiper where it fell behind her desk in Music and Singing.

"Oh thank you," she said.

"Never mind, never mind"—me melting like March ice in a spring pool of timidity and chagrin.

"Oh don't stop me, Daniel Berman. Thank you indeed. My mother says I need practice how to be gracious. Please let me do thank you. Oh thank you, Daniel Berman. . ."

This too is a sort of excess!—and I let her take me under the green grasp of her greedy eyes. The fishy princess pouted, ducked, abstractly reached; I worshiped this body shivering and glistening under bracelets like scale. I saw her as age. Age during that time signifies secret power, secret passion, and the death which follows age is known only as the death which follows love. Girls, born queens, are always older than boys, ten-thousand-eyed drones, living for love, empty-headed, precariously housebroken. "Oh thank you really," said Princess Pattie Donahue, her royal sardine, queen of the hive.

She was gracious on me.

One day, the talk of the Horace Greeley Junior High playground, a pride for events beyond me took her; she wore a shiny black brassiere which hung in lank splendor beneath the faintly distended yarn of her sweater and the morning's accretion of pink angora. She plucked, she pinched; in my poems I never found a rhyme for Donahue. Desire for a girl with nipples like tapioca spots! She went out, it was alleged, with high-school seniors.

It was at this era of sudden sweat and pubic rancor that the issue of working in the store afternoons or at least Saturdays became prominent. "To help out," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To know what's what in life," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To find out it's like something to be a man," my father said.

"To learn the value of a dollar," my mother said.

"To see how people—"

"To learn the value—"

"To help—"

"To learn—"

There always remained another word to propose on the subject. "I have homework to do?" I asked, making this a question because the whole world knew I did no homework.

"Your cousin Bernie works in his father's store," my mother said. "He's learning the value."

"Your cousin Irwin works in his father's store," my father said. "Very mature kit, grown-up. Knows what's what."

No fonder of my cousins, I began to work in the store. At first there were compensations besides learning the value and knowing what's what; for example, I quickly suspected the potentialities of stacking Jell-o. Its six delicious box colors made possible the development of a penchant toward baroque in counter displays. I gave over to fantasy in exercises of pure structure; I brought art to Dried Desserts (end of the first aisle), evolving from a gothic striving and simplicity to a rococo exuberance, raspberry mounting lemon in commercial embrace. The Jell-o man beamed and said I had talent. He promised me an autographed photograph of Jack Benny from his sample case, the signature printed as good as original, the *same identical thing*. I stood off, narrow-eyed, architectural, three loose boxes in each hand. While orange buttresses flew and lime vaulted over naves of cherry, my father grew impatient. "Is that all you got on your mind, the playboy?" It was not all, but he was right: there is a limit to what one can do with Jell-o. And what finally happened to my dream of a celestial engineering? Bananas were sliced into it.

I knew that my friends were playing touch football in the street or perhaps, if it were late afternoon, amorously lobbing rocks onto Pattie Donahue's front porch. Pity the man with an unemployed throwing arm! Aproned and earth-bound despite my Buster Brown aviator shoes, I stood in exile among the creak of shopping baskets and

a cash register clang, such matters unmusical where a rumor of roller skates on a girl's sidewalk pledges passion eternal and a well-placed rock portends an invitation to Rosalie Fallon's second annual traditional Hallowe'en party; these are suburban verities which held even in the prehistory before Mayor Cassidy's first reign, when I began my studies of how to pee in an enameled pot. A marksman now, I turned sullen despite my skill, sour as a strawberry plucked too early; my father knew their need to ripen wild in the sun, unfingered by ambitious farmwives. I was a bad crop, green through, lazy for spite.

"Stop slouching," my mother said. "Stand up like a *mench*. Bernie *likes* the store. He stays and works even when Uncle Abe says go home, here's a quarter."

I learned contempt for my cousins, the submissive ones, who worked so that they could spend dimes like grownups instead of nickels in the Chippewa Lake slot machines. No amount of labor could harden their gluey hands. Irwin had flat feet, a mustache at fourteen because his mother did not tell him to shave, the habit of standing too close when he talked, and, as luck would have it, a talent for projecting his bad breath with such accuracy that any customer's sales resistance must have died in the first whiff. Later he learned to brush his tongue, shave his armpits, sprinkle himself with Johnson's Baby Powder, and rinse his mouth with spearmint mouthwash. Anything for a client. He gave up his soul, a pulpy one at that, which resided in the crevices of his teeth.

Bernie, Narcissus Gaynesbargh the Go-getter, developed an artist's pure love for illness, hospitals, and operations. He saved up enough—"All by his lonesome," bragged Aunt Sarah—for an operation which joined his ears more cunningly to his head. "Clark Gable can let himself go, he's a big man already, but not my Bernie," his mother proudly recounted. "Today he looks a million—stand frontways, Bernie! And how tall is your Daniel?"

Bernie had enough left over in his account to have his piles removed during the after-Christmas slow spell. *Carpe Diem*: he obeyed our junior high motto, constantly improving himself, a medically-made man, an expert on vitamin pills, eye exercises, and local

anesthesia. He was also judicially made; let us not omit the subtle alterations in the orthography of his name. Imagine the legal nightmare in which a Ginsberg-into-Gaynesbargh signifies more rebirth than immolation! The suicide was a complete success. Neither his ears nor his ancestors stuck out, although the stitching showed.

"*They* will marry nice rich girls from New York City, you'll see," my mother threatened me. Later both took Marital Engineering courses, one at Miami University and the other at Cornell, and it paid, because Bernie married a nice rich shoe business from Hartford and Irwin married a wholesale Divan & Studio Couch, a steady thing.

"But," as my mother said, "you can't measure happiness in dollars and cents. There are things more important especially with taxes these days. A sweet little wife, a nice little family. . ."

"Have a piece Sanders." Aunt Sarah consoled her with the Continental assortment. "I got it by Sanders Chocolates when I went downtown to look for my new Person Lamb yesterday. Purse-and-lamb, I mean. Who knows maybe I'll settle for a Shirt Beaver, the season's almost over."

Not even Aunt Sarah can distract my mother when philosophy comes over her. "You could marry in a low element, maybe he wouldn't really be rich only pretending, living high, that kind of a click—"

"My Irwin hm hm, you should know he sent me a this year's pillow direct from the factory to me," Aunt Sarah might remark. "He don't have to put birds in his vest, my Irwin."

"Don't tell me, I know," Mother groaned. "Some people are real type bigshots, some people have to make look big to themselves with escalator heels and Scotch shoelaces, who ever heard?"

"My Irwin—"

"What, you crazy? He's a nice steady boy your Irwin, clean-cut, a neat dresser. I'm mentioning it so happens one of those fast clicks, oh, oh."

"Ho," breathed Aunt Sarah.

They communed in silence over the family shame. They clopped the bitter memory from their outraged palates. They drew the lesson

from what befell poor Cousin Bessie, who returned from a vacation —she had a nice job with the government, too—with pierced ears and coral earrings, a pair of chartreuse silk slacks, and a new man to replace the one who broke his head. "My new husband," she announced, indicating a plump individual with oily sunburned pouches under his eyes, Novelty-style shoelaces, and a sky-blue Kalifornia Kravate with a silver-lightning pin, the tie tucked into a Hickock Kowboy type belt: "Roland, he's in the wholesale business in Los Angeles."

"Wholesale what?" Mother had asked, suspicious already.

"Just wholesale," Cousin Bessie said equably. Roland smiled to show the gap in his teeth bridged by invisible platinum. His little woman spoke for him: "He has the biggest outlet in Los Angeles."

"Ellay," he corrected her.

Later, after Uncle Moish from Indian River Drive discovered that this Roland was a bad-type thief off the legit, not a dealer in factory-to-you eliminate-the-middleman low-costs, they helped Bessie out again. She promised to be more careful next season. She was pushing thirty-five, although the family loyally counted only the last twenty-seven of them; she had combed the summer-time mountains and the winter-time seaside since she buried Lester. Mother took three deep breaths and announced, addressing her in the ceremonial third person while Bessie wept wholesale tears: "Next time she should vacate a week ten days in Atlantic City on the Atlantic, the sun, the salt water taffy, she should meet a nice steady New York type fella, she still got her health why not? Knock on wood. Just he shouldn't have the biggest outlet in Ellay."

Still my cousins were generally nice, steady, and successful even at that early time. I was recalcitrant, a failure in affairs.

"The whole world knows. Aunt Ethel and Aunt Sarah know, it should happen to me I try to be a good mama to you. The whole city knows."

Aunt Sarah encouraged my mother in her own way. "'*Mama*,' my Bernie tell me,"—and her eyes moistened over such devotion—"'Mama,' he says, 'you look like sugar in the urine again. What did I tell you about those two-dollar Sanders assortments?' . . . So

thoughtful," she concluded, folding her arms across a high stalwart bone of her *garment*, leaning back, and waiting for my mother to tell something good about me. I couldn't even read an oral thermometer. After a while she sighed for pity, yawned for contentment, and added soothingly, "Your Danny working nice in the store these days maybe? Just tell him about my Bernie, he'll learn, you got to encourage."

"I look in the looking glass I ask myself why, I got no answer. A son of mine, why? A thirteen-years-old lump," she encouraged.

It wasn't laziness. That's a maternal answer. I would have worked in other ways, and did; if I could have remained at some comprehensible task, delivering orders perhaps, building shelves, loading the truck, or manipulating the stock in the basement, I might have attained a fulfillment equal in its way to Cousin Bernie's avarice for operations. The constant pouring of commands from a triumphant father shivered and shattered my sense for work; he wanted me by his side, proud of an eldest son, any eldest son. For good reasons of his own—he had been poor, he wanted me to see what he had done for himself and for us all—he urged me to learn the pleasure of a direct delicious manipulation of money, its worn old touch of cloth, its warmth of hands and pockets, its smell of sex and work, its color of economy or death in our world, signed in those days by Andrew W. Mellon. "Here! it says right here. Read it yourself. That's the secretary of the treasurer of the United States of America, U.S.A., his own autograph."

"Oh for God's sake. Jake, you can notice such things?"—my mother discovering new depths, she a modest economist, my father not.

"Notice notice," he admitted virtuously. Money was poetry, a symbol of life and power on one side, economy and death for him with the White House on the other, but only a symbol—how could I understand such metaphysics, undergraduate-schooled in that epoch of despair with girls and ambitions of purity? My agile Tartar-eyed father made the distinction by enjoying both the earning and the spending, finding his truth higgledy-piggledy in an exploit of strapping a load-and-a-healthy-half on his 1928 White Motors truck or

in giving himself to a snack of artichoke with Kraft's dressing, the heart his end but the money-colored leaves loved for what they were.

He wanted me to clerk, to *wait on trade*, then, to be an aproned catalyst toward the final term. How could I take money from Mrs. Donahue, whose daughter no one but Tom Moss knew I loved, while Pattie herself teased her mouth with an end of lipstick without glancing at me in my feminizing wraparound? My languishing yip should have betrayed me: "That'll be just three sixty-five, please," recited as I had been taught. It did not; no one saw me. The money joined money in the new Serv-a-slip cash register. *O love me, Pattie! look!*—and I feared that she would. I gave the cash to Hannah, the cashier, my father's deputy while he bargained with the Wheaties jobber for bonus Eversharps and an electric fan-flame wood-glow fireplace.

"Okay, Little Jack, you're picking up now. I'll tell your pa. Just keep the hands out of the pockets when you're making a sale. Say thank you to the customer." Hannah had a tongue cracked and ridged, mounds at the meaty sides and fissures among the yellowish scale, betrothed to dyspepsia. These wounds came of a continual talking confused with a continual eating. No one knew a remedy. She suffered unsilently, chewing Baseball Gum. "I said take hands out of pockets that's a boy. I said say thank you to the nice customer."

"Thank you, Mrs. Donahue," I mumbled miserably.

I carried Mrs. Donahue's order to her Hudson. Pattie moved ahead, her rump twitching like a snapdragon delicately pinched. I fled as she fumbled with her purse for a tip. The next Monday, inspecting my approach from her station at the side entrance to Horace Greeley Junior High, without taking her eyes off mine she bent significantly to whisper into her friend Rosalie Fallon's ear. To stifle their laughter the two of them made paws of their silly adored hands at their mouths. This gesture insured politeness and (reward for a suburban virtue) the secret renewal of laughter when the grocery boy had passed. Sober and unblinking, Pattie nonchalantly rubbed her edible kneecap.

"Don't call me Little Jack," I told Hannah once more without hope. "Call me my name."

"Okay. . . Little Jack," she said, humorously chewing.

Sometimes I carried a book to work, wearing it piously between my shirt and my chest, and then hid with it and a cigarette in the basement among the cases of Libby's Whole Sliced Pineapple and Hinz-zuzz Pork and Beans with Tomato Sauce. The white-washed walls sweated; the storeroom smelled of dampness, rat poison, cardboard packing cases, and a broken bottle of soy sauce. Here I was happy, the complicated atmosphere making me dizzy as I perched corrupt with one of Andy's Wing butts on a peak of pineapple under the dusty 40-watt bulb. Sometimes I put down the Poe (I had memorized *Ulalume* without being able to pronounce it) and moodily considered my childhood, before Pattie Donahue and before my parents had decided I was a man, when I had sometimes visited this range of cans and bottles to leap like a goat among it in my innocence. I practiced a tragic sigh, inhaling soy.

Always my father roared down the stairway to discover me. "YOU THINK YOU CAN KID ME, HAH? The A & P can't even kid me, I got a list of your tricks—"

I stood up with no answer, understanding that he would forever find me, silent in my wished chagrin. I could not explain to him the disgrace of working in a store in a neighborhood where boys had important unexplainable things to do, secret clubs and fatal loafing, while their fathers managed offices for Standard Machines or handled law cases for insurance companies downtown. I wanted him to commute instead of work, like the others; I could not tell either of us the reason for my stubborn reluctance to follow him to the market, racy and challenging though it was. I felt a justice in his despair with me. A coward, I hid each time.

"Your mother says today you'll be good, I say I'll find you sneaking off with a book."

I studied his boots on the cement and deeply assented. He had looked in the backroom to see if I were filling orders, giving me the benefit of a doubt and profligate hope which is still my debt.

"*Nu*, what do you say for yourself? I'm going crazy upstairs, it's a big one-cent-sale, the Saturday help's no good these days...Hah?"

I said nothing.

"Why not tell me another lie, you'll be good like you promised I should be happy?"

I stared, Poe sweaty in my hands.

"So why don't you at least say you had to go the toilet, the mensroom?"—a treble note of exasperation hidden in his bass, wanting an excuse for me, loving his oldest.

I refused this. I was overmoral for a moment, going on thirteen, as he was overhappy; I despised anything but extreme commitments, surrender to his world or defiance of it.

"What's the matter, you constipated? You got stomach trouble?"—pretending that I had given us this excuse, unable to bear our misery together.

He watched the tears silently fill my eyes.

He relented; he appealed to me, trying to preserve his anger by shouting; he betrayed his helplessness by heavily sitting down beside me on the canned pineapple. "What's the matter, you hungry, you want your mother should make you a tomato and balonny sandwich with Kraft's Miracle Whip dressing?"

"I want to go upstairs and help out," I whispered at last.

Reconciled, unable to preserve animus, he bumped against me up the narrow steps. Instead of letting me sink into the crowd of customers reaching with their lists and their clippings of advertisements at the counters, he ordered me to go to lunch with him, knowing that I liked this. To have the Business Men's special with Dad in a restaurant was one of the compensations; choosing food is the act of a god—only gods and businessmen don't have mothers to tell them what to eat, filling their plates with it. It was a pure joy although a bad restaurant; we had to go there because Guy Mallin owed my father two hundred dollars, which he never paid and we couldn't eat through by the time he left his wife and ran off to Montreal with Stella, the waitress, and a week's receipts. (When this happened Dad tried, although he knew little about the restaurant business, to help out poor Mrs. Mallin, who had no children but only a thyroid condition to give her an interest in life.) Both of us would have preferred an egg roll and hamburger steak at Louie's, the Chinaman across the street, and our unity on this—winking across the table as fast-talking

Guy Mallin approached—cleared the hatred of civilizations between father and son. I should insist on this: the storm confined itself to its direct object, my laziness, rising like an east wind to its peak on the busy day, Saturday or before holidays, then falling away. "You learn with meet people," he only said. "You learn with know their ways."

After we finished our lunch I hid in the basement of the store to read Edgar Allan Poe.

II

As the months went by, the ruses deepened and the anger swam like some exiled bull carp in the deepest pools of the natures of my mother, my father, and me. Pattie Donahue had definitively given up roller skating in the street, and not only on bricked Pittsburg Road but also on the mellifluous asphalt of Chesterton Avenue. We were freshmen in junior high, seventh graders learning dignity from a Social Dancing teacher added to the curriculum by the Board of Education which decided that Grace and Poise (formerly Comportment) were as essential as geography and algebra to the Young Men & Women of Tomorrow, be they bond salesmen like their fathers or *homemakers* like their mothers. The Real Estate Taxpayers League issued a protest against educational frills; pioneering virtues that made our country great, assessment already excessive, it argued. Artichokes, bulky and hard to handle, were coming into season again.

Shamefully I pretended to be sleeping Saturday mornings when my father had gotten up at three or earlier. Mother was more violent, my father more deeply hurt—the denial, after all, was of him. She nagged constantly; yet on Saturdays when I stayed motionless slugabed, her pride in sleep—"It's very healthy"—protected me there. Later, my father telephoning to ask if I had arisen yet, he fell silent before her report, pressing the receiver to his ear amid the mob of shoppers importunate about fork-tongued Hannah's dais, and he darkly said nothing while Mother repeated, infuriated with me but stubborn in her allegiance to health: "Let the kid sleep just one more morning, kids need sleep. It's good for them."

Having vacuumed, she herself got ready to go to the store for *relief*. Out of some relic of pride I could not bring myself to feign until she would safely leave me among my angry bedclothes in the occult reproach of a house. "I'm up," I fatally admitted. I reached for a paltry revenge in wearing yesterday's socks. She edified me in a steady torrent on the streetcar to the store:

"No good! big lump! lazy good-for-nothing! You're thirteen already and look at you!"

"Twelve," I corrected her.

"'Please Daddy I want to work in the store like a big man,' Bernie always says. Aunt Sarah says. Such a go-getter! But what do you say?—look ma the dog wet the rug I'm twelve years old. Aunt Sarah says I should stop aggravating myself. Please give a look my waricose weins from standing up." She had forgotten that the effect of threatening to telephone Aunt Sarah when I was *bad* had been dissipated years ago with the advent of Unlimited Calls. Sometimes I had even offered to dial the number for her.

"A big lump like you he should give me a rest, take the load off your feet Ma like Bernie, not trouble trouble all the time."

"Why is it you always say I'm thirteen when it's something you want me to do and you know I'm twelve?" I asked, a savant without rimless glasses. "And when I want to do something I can't because I'm not old enough, I'm only eleven? My birthday is July twentieth at six o'clock in the morning."

"I remember," she said morosely. "And a fine night I had with you in Mount Sinai all night too, they almost had to use force-its. Dr. Shapiro said my bones were so delicate close together. . . Thirteen, going on now. Even Uncle Morton knows about you, I'm so ashamed in the family why I told Aunt Ethel I'll never hold my head high again, at least Morton he got daughters they keep themselves clean at least not so much aggravation, all right so worry a tiny bit they should marry nice, but not heartache a no-good like you day in day out—"

Outside the streetcar the first autumn leaves were burning in piles on the street, sending up an odor redolent of freedom in the open air. My friends flamboyantly loitered on the Saturday streets, chalk

in their mouths, their hearts unfettered. Pattie Donahue was perhaps walking alone in Rocky River Park, just waiting for me telepathically to find her.

The store opened about us with the intense plushy smell of old vegetables. Hannah was comforting old Mrs. Simmons, a childless widow whose husband had been manager of the Guarantee Trust, Rocky River branch; she generally admitted herself among us with the distant face of someone who disliked the smell of the inside of her own nose, but now she claimed to have seen a spider in a hand of bananas. "It probably wasn't a deadly poisonous banana spider," Hannah said. "Did it have a lot of legs? Furry ones from Costo Rico?"

"A South American banana spider! oh!" Mrs. Simmons, realizing that it was a foreign element, rolled her eyes in search of a pleasant place to faint.

"Probably not deadly poisonous, though. Probably just a sleepy little old banana spider from the deadly jungles of Hatey." Mrs. Simmons fainted. That is, considering her dignity and the aristocratic unpaid bills in the drawer with Hannah's sandwiches, she *swooned*. "Anyway no one else saw it, the thousand-legger bug, the horrible deadly spider," Hannah mused on, rubbing Mrs. Simmons' wrists without taking off her Ovaltine Birthstone & Goodluck Ring.

"Ouch, you're scratching," said Mrs. Simmons.

My father, harried but always expecting the best, greeted me with an order. Stack the oranges, wait on Mrs. Simmons, put on your apron, what's the matter with you? . . . Could I confess the chief reason for my tardiness, a hope that telepathic pressure concentrated among my bedclothes might compel Mrs. Donahue to buy her Ohio State hothouse tomatoes and Swansdown ready-mix no-sift cake flour before my surrender to penance in a wraparound? *Develop Your Will Increase Your Power. Sample Booklet Fool Your Friends. 25c Coin or Stamps.* No, I could not. My father's will developed, he spoke a language in which existed no vocabulary to explain that, among the people with whom he chose to bring me up, it was more important to run end in a pick-up touch football game, spinning craftily about the young trees planted by the Our Street Beautiful committee, than to fill orders in sour old orange crates on Saturday

afternoons. We all paid, in our various ways, a price for those trees and for the privilege of overhead doors on our garages and colonial-style magazine racks for our Saturday Evening Posts. He did not draw the consequences of his ambition for me; if he judged our neighborhood to be better than that of his childhood, then our neighborhood would judge his world. In a develop-your-will (Fool Your Friends) like my father's the only lack was the will to find my will-less longing. He worked! Mother worked! Like dogs!—They were right, but they could not see through to my rightness, forgetting a child's hunger to belong. Ulalume might have been for the ages, but Rosalie Fallon and Pattie tongued their malicious pencils and wrote my fate in their Slam Books. He knew he was a foreigner, my father did; I had to discover it in pain, shame before my parents, and self-judging. "I earned my own living when I was thirteen, and proud of it," he had said.

"Your father earned his own living when he was twelve," Mother remarked contentedly in explanation, "and he is proud of it. *Proud* of it."

"Thirteen he said," I said.

"Proud he said," she said.

He studied me in sorrow and silence, figuring with his short black-nailed thick-knuckled hands reaching for the silvery crating hammer in his back pocket. I was just a kid. I even looked like him. Hannah said so. Even Guy Mallin said I was a chip off the. Hey kid? You want a Business Men's plate with chocolate ice cream instead of the green peas with butter sauce? It should be easy to figure. . . "Gravy on that there ice cream haw-haw yessir, hey kid? Gravy!" Guy Mallin roared. "A real chip if I ever saw one, Jake. I'm telling you listen to me now. Your eyes. Your chin. His mother's, a sweet little woman you got there, nose. Yessir. Your hair. Off the old block there, Jake. Good material, hey? It won't be long before it's *Jake & Son*, what-do-you-say? I'm telling you now Jake you heard what I said."

"Maybe things are different these days," he told me. "You ain't the way I was."

My father had the gift of listening to the artichokes at the top of

a load in such a way—they informed him in a language which only he and the artichokes spoke—that he always knew when their brothers at the bottom were defective, defeated, edged with rust or shriveled from a stingy soil. Silent in their hampers, they communicated by the violence of love, all knowing their role on this occasion as opportunities, each thick-leafed one, for a sociable debating between farmer and merchant, green, crisp, candid, and nutritive after a pleasant journeying into the hands of women. They accepted the gift of himself which my father made, their shoots curly for him, their unbaked hearts shy in a bra of ticklish felt. Buy us! sell us!—they asked nothing more. Artichokes understood my father, and his sympathy for vegetables arose to meet theirs for him. Devotion—he gave this freely. He accepted, too, being stuck with thorns.

Unfortunately I, even in those days, was not an artichoke—perhaps not so rewarding, my heart not luscious with a dab of Miracle-Whip, stunted in fact, even hornier, full of bad character and a brooding plant rust. "Lots of personality," my mother had said, feebly defending me when as a child I had refused to shell lima beans for the store with the rest of the family on Friday nights. "Everyone says he takes after your side, Jake. Ethel says, Sarah says."

"Since I was thirteen! I got scars on my back, the bucket cut me, the greenhorn I didn't get a pad cloth. Look at Irwin, look at Bernie born the same week like you in Mount Sinai, you was the first so I got your mother a semi-private. A healthy kid like you, he sleeps all morning Saturday."

"Since he was twelve years old a greenhorn," Mother mournfully intoned. "Who ever heard of it?"

Pattie Donahue plucked at her sweater and pouted with kiss-proof lipstick (maybe) over teeth lucky to serve her. Lewis Snyder, the sheik, told stories about Rosalie Fallon and Pattie. Tom Moss told me. "The liar," we agreed, ferociously believing him.

Such matters flowed in time; the store remained outside time, its claim ripening through the spines but as incredible to me as a heartless artichoke to my father. The store gulped me down. I evaded, I squirmed, I stubbornly bent, receded, and persisted like heartburn,

taking all shapes but in fact knowing only itself, which has no shape and a mysterious matter.

"You don't want, what kind of a reason is that?" my mother demanded, fertile as Hera in argument. "No reason, that's what kind."

I couldn't explain to myself or to them, much less to Aunt Sarah or to Aunt Ethel, to Hannah, Guy Mallin, or Cousin Bernie the Smarty. Let him marry a nice rich girl from New York Queens in the clothing business, I don't care, I sacrilegiously insisted. My single purpose was love for Pattie Donahue, whose father carried a portfolio to work in his hairless pink little hands; she would love only the elaborate loungers, the conspicuous consumers—a little Veblenite she was! You Americans all long for the useless, the hymen no proper end; it feathers no beds, it fleshes no bellies—this Mother and Dad might have pointed out if they had argued their philosophy. I sensed, too, that my father's agility and strength and love moving among the objects all his in the store were a threat to me, the more dangerous because—one of his few fatal thoughts outside the moment—he was beginning to see Jack's Fruit & Vegetable in terms of immortality for both of us. He asked only a sign of recognition for this gift to me.

I refused his gift daily now. Even the Jell-o counter fell into ruins. My ultimate denial lay outside morality, essential to character. My father was overhappy, overmoral. I crouched like a troll under a mushroom in the cellar, a troll who read *Ulalume* and murmured, "Pattie Donahue!" with dilated eyes in the shadow of a shipment from Procter & Gamble. Poor Dad!

We can measure his desolation. He left his struggle and joyous head-on combat with farmers, jobbers, salesmen, Saturday help, policemen, wilting lettuce and pears which remained green until they rotted, competitors, the chain stores, the landlord, debtors, creditors, the delivery truck, the account books, the government, insects, rodents, spoilage, wastage, heat, cold, the margin of profit, draw items, push merchandise, merchandise which he could not get, premiums, samplers, one-cent giveaways, Christmas trees on January second and Easter candy in May, children who skated through a

display of jars of olives (the olives lined up one by one in bottles shaped like a straw, optically illusive, expensive all the same), Mr. Jenkins who insisted on Aunt Mary's pancake mix and would not be content with Aunt Jemimah's or any other Aunt's because he wanted to honor in this way his poor dead old Aunt Mary his mother's sister, Mrs. Rawlings the klepto whose chauffeur dropped her off at the store every morning to slip a bottle of vanilla extract into her pink muff (her daughter paid, but we had to keep score), the charity ladies and the lottery girls, the kids selling advertisements in their parochial school bulletins, the beggars who claimed to have had a store just like his in Phoenix, Arizona, until they hit a run of bad luck back in '29 (he was unanimously elected to a directory circulated by a syndicate of beggars, Phoenix & Miami Beach Chapter), the faithful customers who tried to convert him to their religions, Mrs. Colonel Greenough who came with tears to tell him that her husband forbade her to shop at Jack's Fruit & Vegetable any longer because the colonel himself had given him three months to read a book on technocracy and he had not yet complied (she bought a farewell bouquet of cauliflower before she left), the high-school teacher who wanted to pay an overdue bill in the privacy of her chamber, the judges asking support both moral and ah financial in the coming primaries, the tax collectors, the bill collectors, the garbage collectors, the health inspectors, the housing inspectors, the zoning inspectors, electricians, refrigerator repair men, insurance which only covered fires begun by safety matches when his fire had resulted from a cigar butt, illness among his clerks, jealousies, rivalries, romances, extended lunch hours, female troubles which (a gentleman) he could not publicly doubt, inventories, lentil soup in cans labeled liver pâté, children who descended like locusts to remove all the tops from the Ralston boxes to send away as a mark of esteem for Tom Mix, the electric cash register playing Chopin in a short circuit, Hannah who had B.O., Andy who left his hair among the macaroons, Myrna who showed too much of her bosom in order to encourage Mr. Tramme to take an extra cantaloupe, and other problems which I'll not mention because I want to avoid making a list.

My father abandoned his direct response to these issues in order to *use psychology* on me. He appealed in subtle ways. He tried to *get me interested.* His Tartar eyes were made to squint for laughter and appetite, not cunning. My heart contracts with sadness for him now, sadness and regret. He came to me on the porch one Sunday afternoon, his great arms slack at his sides, saying, "Say!" in the way of a good fellow, and asked me to write a paragraph for his weekly advertisement in the neighborhood throwaway. I responded, too, working hard at a composition modeled on "The Raven," sharpening three pencils into oblivion before I finished. Proudly I announced to Tom Moss the prospect of publication in the West Side Advertiser.

The work never appeared. Trochees had no place next to bargains in Crisco. The Crisco people paid half and supplied the engraving; the Spry people, not caught napping at the shortening, offered to pay sixty per cent and sent my mother a portable sun lamp for her sinuses. I wasn't even impregnated with Vitamin D or Viosterol from Wisconsin, living by Poe and Pattie. Pyschology failed; my father came as an alien to such maneuvers. Nevermore!

One day I sneaked out of the store at four-thirty, made my own dinner of Laub's rye, Blue Moon pimento cheese with those taste-delightful little chopped-up pieces of real pimento, Krunchy peanut butter (kan't remember the brand), and Thursday's spoiled milk; then I went to an Edward G. Robinson with Tom Moss. The three of us stood off the coppers for a reel and a half, and when they finally got Edward G. the camera noticed a paper boat which sailed down the gutter in the symbolic rain. "Just like The Strange Case of Monsieur Whatsizname," I pedantically reminded Tom. We fought back our tears, magnificent to THE END, ate a dime's worth of evergreen mints, and went divvies on a Spicy Detective to read under the Jantzen's Swimsuit for That Lee-*uscious* Look billboard on the way home. I told him about Pattie and he told me about Rosalie Fallon. Our patient listening to each other was more than politesse; we learned through it although the histories remained classically similar, unmodified in months except for the time Rosalie kicked Tom in the shins when he complimented her by rubbing one of the last March snowballs in her face. He rolled up his pantleg to show me

the wound once more. I accused him of preserving it with salt. He denied this. He accused me of envy. I lowered my eyes. Tom was a lady-killer, he was; I'll never understand how he did it.

"Well, good night Tom. Good luck with Rosalie."

"Well, good night Dan. I'll ask Lewis Snyder about Pattie. He took Virginia Thompson out on a date and maybe she knows something. He'll tell me if I ask him because I know something on him."

Good night. . . Good night. . . In that midworld of childish seriousness and the first adult frivolity of passion Tom and I needed the sense of banding together, our sufferings held in common while our sense of them remained untouchable, pariahs of glandular enthusiasm in a structure built of economy. He gave me the Spicy to hide in the garage. I had often dreamed of moving through an atmosphere of glue, invisibly held from my family's home in an empty night. Empty?—full of unknown excess. Now I whistled, leaving Tom Moss an hour before midnight, forgetting that I had last seen my parents seven hours earlier when my father had said, "Wait on trade!" and I had crept out the back door where Andy was boxing strawberries and beet greens were blackening in the sun.

The door to our house was locked. The windows were dark. There was no key under the mat. The crickets suddenly deafened me, like in the movies. I thought I knew, then, how Edward G. felt when the boys went over to the South Side mob, but found a basement window open, crawled through the coal chute, and significantly murmured Pattie's name out of the side of my mouth. Ulalume Donahue, Killer Berman's moll. . . I'd have flipped a quarter with disdain except that it was too dark and I had no quarter. *Dad!* I thought. I worried about the gas stove upstairs. Maybe they were all dead and so I should bang on the door until they let me in to sleep in my own bed. What if there were rats in the basement? Big ones like in the Paris sewers with Gene Valgene? The washing machine opened its mouth at me in the darkness. *Mother!* I thought. If the water pipes broke and I got drowned they'd be sorry. They'd be sorry someday when I spit blood into my monogrammed handkerchief from sleeping all alone in a damp basement. They would be sorry. I was sorry. *Mother and Dad!* I thought.

Without taking off my shoes I slept on the extra kitchen table in the basement, amid dirty laundry (my pillow) and old hatreds (my dreams).

III

Even this passed. The next Saturday I was as faithful as Irwin, as true as Bernie with his eyes like spoiled oysters. I tasted during one evening the delights of approval, staying up with Mother and Dad while we discussed the day's business, counted the receipts, and discussed the pros and cons of tangle displays against neat pyramids of cans or fruit. I spoke for tangle displays, Mother for order; Dad listened to us both, sipping his tea with little Ahs through his lump of sugar, and reserved decision. He tried to lasso my head as he used to in a ring of cigar smoke. "It's too big," he complained. "Just like mine, a size seven seven-eights. So look who needs a hat! You want a Stetson?"

We had a long late supper, and before going to bed he slipped me three dollar bills in a secret conspiratorial gesture while Mother stacked the dishes.

"I saw! I saw!" she cried out, her eyes peeping bright in the mirror over the sink. We all giggled together.

Dad slapped her rump, yawned, and said, "Nothing like a good day's work, hey?" in his imitation of Guy Mallin.

"Jake, you crazy?" At peace with each other we parted. "And don't forget whose birthday is next month," my mother said: "Yours. You'll be thirteen, kiddel."

She had it right this time. It was a real truce; I knew its joys. But had anything been altered? As aphoristic Aunt Ethel might say, "A leopard coat can't change its spots."

A few days afterward I received a letter. The envelope carried my name on the outside, together with the smart-alecky title *Master*, all printed in green ink. I studied it, marveling, my first mail since the revolutionary discovery of INCREASE YOUR WILL POWER FOOL YOUR FRIENDS, and for that I had sent away a coupon and a quarter. I sniffed it. I licked the ink and made a smear of what our art teacher called *graded area*. I tasted my name in green, finding it

more subtle than black but just as lucid. At last I decided to open the letter.

It was an invitation from Mr. B. Franklyn Wilkerson to go on a Nature Walk a week from Saturday. Mr. Wilkerson, who taught General Science to the seventh grade, had worked out a plan to augment his income during the summer vacation by conveying flower names and leaf shapes to suburban scholars. Small, swarthy, with three daughters and thin black hair artfully spaced and glued into place to cover his scalp, Mr. Wilkerson recited Science (general) with his neck petrified for fear a sudden breeze or emotion might betray his baldness. Zealous, he devoted himself to general science textbooks, turning the pages slowly to avoid drafts. A real scientist would have perforated the pages. He was but a general scientist, however, combining, as he thought, the virtues of the practical and the theoretical in Elevating the Young, an intellectual sort whose pink resentful mouth and clenched neck gave him the expression of someone who had swallowed a banana sideways.

The first walk, a free trial, would take place on a Saturday, and the Saturday before the Fourth, the third-busiest day of the year in the store. I decided not to go.

Tom Moss was going. Lewis Snyder, who had dates alone with girls, was going. I learned that several of them, including Rosalie Fallon and Pattie Donahue, would be botanically present. I decided to go.

We met, everyone carrying lunch but me, at eleven-thirty. Mother didn't know about it; I had run away from the store, taking my cap from under the cash register and, for some last scruple, telling Hannah to tell my father that I had gone. "Where?"—but I disappeared without answering, subtle as a hungry tomcat unable to hide its rut, sneaking around corners with its yellow eyes scheming. Lewis Snyder had a scout canteen filled with near-beer left over after repeal. I suspected him of planning to offer Pattie some.

Pedantic, amorous, shifty-eyed general scientists, we followed Mr. Wilkerson into the Rocky River reservation. He wore a checkered golf cap, its band black with Sta-Neet, and showed how he had taught his wife to wrap his lunch—cellophane insulated the

deviled eggs each from each. "Practical. Sanitary germfree. Vitamins spoil in the open air," he advised us.

Tom Moss, my friend the skeptic, whispered to me that he thought it was supposed to be *good* for you to be out in the fresh air, and then went to step on Rosalie Fallon's heels.

We penetrated the woods, already hungry. "Now right here on your left children we find an interesting phenomenon page one hundred and forty-eight in Brenner's figure sixteen that orange growth over there with the black spots now that's a wild spermaphore," Mr. Wilkerson remarked. "Ess. Pee. Ee. Arrh—"

"Looks like a toadstool to me," I said.

"Spermaphore. Silver spoons unreliable poor quality silver these days no workmanship. Damp places. Twenty-four on a picnic without a general scientist. Could have told them. Whole party dead in eight to ten hours. Horrible. Too bad. Ess, pee, ee—"

A voice occurred behind me, whispering, "Hello, Daniel Berman." It was Pattie. "Toadstools are very poisonous"—she leaned sociably. "Do you like are you fond of mushrooms?"

I soared into paradise at her feet. "My mother cooks spermaphores with meat loaf," I said, "and stuffed peppers."

"Oh!"—a gasp of scandal. "She does not! You'll all be dead. . . Does she?"

"Yes," I lied, death-defying—what could be a better beginning between lovers? All lies come true in a world of such supple twelve-year-old facts. It was cool here across the city from the store. Birds soon to be falsely named cocked their heads in the trees and lectured us. Some place customers swarmed amid the imperatives of telephones and the distance between my father and me widened past even the nine-month doubt separating an instant of giving from the birth of a son. Fatherhood, a metaphysical idea, was being taken from Dad as Mrs. Rawlings slipped her daily bottle of vanilla extract into her bosom, no one to distract her, and as Mr. Wilkerson bravely broke the perfidious spermaphore with a five-foot stick, no academician he, a man of general action in science. Rosalie Fallon gave her pressed-lip assent and moral outrage against hypocritical silver spoons while my thoughts fled back from the store to recall prepared

speeches of passion for Miss Donahue, known by Killer Berman and Edward G. as Ulalume or The Lost Lenore.

"Oh-h-h," she was saying.

"Look the bug," I replied.

She pretended to be scared, not. I knew. Death and complicity—love is not a biological gesture in suburban children, O Mr. Wilkerson! I had forgotten my speeches and Ulalume.

Despite this meeting I again felt deserted, lunchless at lunchtime. Tom Moss pretended not to notice: excuse him his hunger. "Where's yours?" Pattie asked, her mouth full.

"Don't have any. My mother didn't. Not hungry anyway."

Girls always have enough to give. Suburban girls (economical) always have enough to invest. Sweetly she murmured, "You can have one of my bacon and tomato-motto sandwiches and a bite of cottage cheese with the canopy, please do." Smiling, licking her lipstick, her eyes calculating under the modest fluttering venereal lids, she whispered intimately: "And a cookie the one with the candied cherry in the middle, please do, really."

"Oh!" I protested.

*Take*, *take*, my mother would have said.

"Really, I don't mind, please do," said dainty Miss Patricia Donahue.

I did.

Later, when we bid farewell to sporting, big-toothed, intellectual (generally scientific) Mr. Wilkerson, and thanked him for a lovely nice afternoon, and promised to ask our parents to fork over five smackeroos for a Program of Nature Walks, Pattie Donahue allowed it to be known that I was walking her home. Under the circumstances even Lewis Snyder had to count it a date with a girl alone; the evidence whelmed, overwhelmed. I obeyed the protocol. We had a coke and then an ice cream stick. That Snyder must have been eating his heart out, at least aggravated. All right then—I soliloquied with Tom Moss *qua* Conscience & Scorekeeper—half-credit then for a daytime date.

"Did you get a free one?" I asked.

She read her ice cream stick. "No," she said.

"Neither did I. Don't believe in luck anyway"—and I expounded my philosophy of will power concentrate your way to fame and/or fortune. I tried to recite *Ulalume* but forgot it.

My mother's arches were hurting in her Enna Jetticks, but she avoided my father so that he would not order her home. Andy was making off to the vegetable cooler with a bagful of macaroons. Basketwood splintered under orders; customers fidgeted untended; my father wiped his forehead with a paper towel from the pine forests of Maine, leaving crumbs of lint, and mourned me.

"I never knew you were so smart," said Pattie Donahue.

We had fallen silent, sitting on the front steps of her house in the shadow of a bush where her mother could not see us. Up the street someone was hosing his car, an incontinent sound, in preparation for a Fourth of July trip. The afternoon was over. Pattie Donahue, an economical creature, an Indian giver, took back her gift in a way which expressed her genius. Business acumen. Operating costs and turnover. Appraising me with her turtle-round eyes, shrewd to calculate the value of an investment, she first created a bear market by sighing Ohh, rustling her dress, and accidentally touching my arm with her transparent turquoise-veined hands. Cologned and dusted with powder, she breathed on me.

"Yes!" I spilled out, naked in summer smells. "Do you like me, Pattie? I like you."

"Sure I like you"—disappointment and a pout that it had been so easy. Even economy becomes sport with such a housekeeper. "Sure I like you but you're too fat."

"Fat?" I repeated stupidly.

Her laughter twinkled in the July calm by the watered bush. "Fat I mean skinny. I mean you're just a *grocery* boy, you. You just grub around a certain store I could name all the Saturdays *I* ever heard about, except I suppose today—"

She was a sly old creature, that Pattie Donahue. The lips: *grocery boy*. The frozen iris: the same. Her laughter caroled forth, free, enterprising, resolute, the investment paying off in a Saturday afternoon dividend of power. Not all men are men, her laughter told her. This is a profit forever, my face told her.

"Oh but—oh but—oh but—" I said.

She put her little hand to her mouth and delicately closed it. Tee-hee. She looked at me, unblinking. My father, knowing he was a foreigner, could have accepted this in the perspective of history. I had to discover a fact without a past; it leapt out at me like some fierce fish from the glittering shale of Pattie Donahue's economical eyes.

I stood up. "Thank you for the sandwich and the cookie," I said. (The cookie with a preserved cherry on it.)

"Oh me no," she said.

"I was hungry."

"Oh you're welcome really," she said. "Thank you for the coke. Thank you for the ice cream."

"Good-by, Pattie."

"It was nice, Daniel Berman," she said, "truly very nice."

IV

I prowled, growing up fast that afternoon. I climbed a fat hump of a mailbox for packages and, my hands hanging in front, or my elbows on my knees and my fists in my cheeks, I watched the traffic on Parkside Boulevard. I did not choose the sentimental places, the tree by the lake, the woods where the river on which we skated in winter spread out like a sheet. I began to understand how the lost Lenore really got mislaid, without a dark conversational bird, without a tomb, without even a long metrical sigh. A heavy July sky lowered and thickened above me. I perched on the box like an animal in a dream.

But I was no animal in no dream. I was wide-awake, me, itchy, straddling a mailbox. Once someone mailed a book between my legs. I did not stop to wonder whether it were some quaint and curious volume, this being already forgotten lore. I studied the houses squatting like fat-necked bullfrogs along the boulevard, puzzled over the nay-saying mouths and step of the emerging strollers, celebrated and grieved for the crystallizing structure of my judgment (my *complexes*), no longer contained by sad and pretty words—grieved but did not cry.

Long after dark I finally went home. My parents were in the

kitchen, talking in low voices, the relieved hawing of Saturday nights absent today. Entering at the street, I went directly to my room and lay down on the bed. I made none of the dramatic flourishes of locking the door or pushing the footstool in front of it.

"Daniel!"

Doltish, I wondered if this were what it felt like to be an adult. It was true that for weeks I had been awakening mornings with my bite clamped, my jaw aching, and my tongue plunged against my teeth. Was that the seeding for Pattie Donahue's educational crop? her economy predicted by my extravagance in sleep?

"Daniel!"—Mother's voice. I went. Mother stood by the kitchen table. Dad sat without looking at me, his head lowered, his hands about a bowl of soup. "You should come when I called you," she said.

"I did come."

"When I called you I said. Not whenever you please." She looked at my father and waited for him to speak. He did not. We all waited for him, the challenged one, amid the summer smell of flypaper in the kitchen and the buzzing of the wily flies.

Resentfully I broke the stillness: "I went on a naturewalk."

"What?—what?"

"I learned what's a toadstool and the names of birds. A naturewalk. Mr. Wilkerson general science from junior high, he—"

"And what about Mr. and Mrs. Slave-their-heads-off, I suppose your parents by the store?" my mother asked. The sarcasm gave me hope; it was, after all, only dialectic again. How soon hope returns! We dwell in it even after the exile to which Pattie Donahue's laughter and nibbling teeth send us.

Turning to my father, whose head bent over the table in a way I only remembered afterward—his brother had died and Mother said he was crying because he was sad and I didn't believe her because daddies don't cry—I appealed to him with a manly challenge: "Almost everyone I know went on the naturewalk."

He did not yet look up.

"It's educational. Mr. Wilkerson says. Tom Moss was there. Almost everyone in our grade Seven-B Seven-A was there—"

"Lookit my waricose from standing up all day working like a horse eating my heart out," Mother said. "You should take a load off my feet, not I should carry you like a baby you're going on fourteen."

"Thirteen," I said.

"Going on anyway," she insisted, "*going* on. That's what it means. Big lummox. Look at my waricose go on look lookit."

She could not know—my cruelty at twelve years, soon thirteen!—that my only concern was for surgery on the distended veins, as other women had, instead of wearing the lumpy corset that bulged about her calves under webbed brown stockings. My garment, she called it. Like taxes, Jake says. Teeth too, O! Sarah had the same trouble after Bernie and she took calcium. You ask me I think better injections in the arm, injections.

Dad listened watchfully over the soup in the evening heat. He hunched and studied vegetables in the bowl.

See how I admit the two of them to paper. Put my refusal of their world, which was their deepest gift to me, beside a son's longed-for and imagined love for his parents. Let me call myself a liar, but don't you be quick to do it. "Want to playboy around all your life dreaming smoke in the head?" my father used to ask me, and yet he loved me despite the law that we cannot love someone who refuses our gifts. I did not see the power and light of his world, in which the four causes were felt in action with my mother, vegetables and the Saturday specials; I had looked for light and power in Pattie and Poe while all the Aristotelian potencies and more lay waiting for me with the combustible garbage swept into the backyard at closing time each evening. The backroom, emptied and cleaned, was filled and emptied of carrot tops, beet greens, and the furry blue glow of spoiled oranges. I stalled; my father waited. I looked; my father watched.

A week earlier I had overheard Mother murmuring into the telephone, "So how's your Bernie? My Daniel shouldn't be better, he got a all-A report card and with a B plus in gymnistics, he gained two pounds by the scale but he's full of complexes, still a heart-ache in the store. . . Yah. . . I read in the paper it's complexes, Jake says he'll grow out. . ."

But only the complexes kept growing out. It's because I really like my parents that it costs me so much to speak kindly of them. I remember how my father offered me his entire world and I threw it in his face like a rotten orange because he left out one little lump of an Atlantis, my own world.

"Listen to your father he's talking," my mother said. He had not yet spoken, but she knew him well and knew he now would. "You take his fifteen cents for a movie, don't you? Listen to your father."

Still sitting in his washed-out shirt crusted with salt under the armpits, in his old blue serge work pants, once dress-up with the sharpy stripe down the legs, more generous than fathers have a right to be, he tried to help me expiate my sin in a ritual of reprimand. No ceremony could heal him this time, but he waited. This came before the beginning: "At your age I was a man," he said.

He was right.

He swayed over the soup, food breathing back into his body the prayers he had forgotten in leaving his own father. His swaying shoulders heavily sloped and remembered. His father had forbidden him to go to godless America, better to die than to be unfaithful. This too he had forgotten, his father struck down by a Cossack's rifle, but the chant in his voice and the dance of his shoulders remembered.

"Look at you"—he could not. "Are you a man?"

No. Right again.

"A playboy. A naturewalker. A eater of ice cream."

All true. I still like ice cream, especially with Hershey's chocolate syrup. He taught me quality in food, my father. I waited for him to force me to make myself what we both agreed I should be; no ceremony could compel it though only ceremony could confirm it. Still I had to choose. Untheological, without brand names, we improvised ritual.

"A lollypop!" my mother shrilled, thinking she was on her husband's side. Here she was wrong. I was not a lollypop.

"Let me tell it, Rose," my father said softly, as if this were an incident on their trip to South Haven. "It's my turn to tell it, Rose."

"I don't care"—me turning in my pointed shoes perforated for

ventilation and sweet beauty's sake under the eyes of Pattie. I mourned her now, blaming my birth. "I don't care about you." I lowered my gaze to my father's stubby foreign feet in steel-backed boots. "None of the kids have to do it. I don't care about you and your store."

He needed an instant for this. I gave it to him overflowing. "And—your—store."

His hand floated up like a speck fuming on the eyes; his fist crashed down on the enameled table like the plunging claw of a crate hammer. "Oh! Oh!"—Mother. Soup splashed out on his pants and ran weeping with little red carrot eyes.

His gaze was prophetic in mine. "*Some kits help out in the store*," he said.

"We were practically supposed to go," I said, neither retreating nor regretting, gaining time and learning patience. "Mr. Wilkerson is a teacher."

"*Some kits remember their father and mother.*"

Everyone knows where it hurts when you begin to cry—that place at the back of the throat. Pins jabbed under my eyelids. My palate ached. The tears hurt most in that instant before they break out. . . And then I imagined colognied Pattie's cool laughter at my father's pronunciation of the *d* in *kits* ("—remember their father and mother"), and then drunk with the idea of the murder of someone I loved, my belly awash at the thought, I screamed him to his feet: "I won't, I *won't* work in your store. I don't want it. It's not my life. I hate it. I hate it!"

He stood huge over me, smelling of leafy vegetables and sweat, smelling of his strength and his terror because he would have to beat me. This is the reek of power, what the men at the Food Terminal understood when Ollie the Agent tried to shake down him first of the West Side men. . . The opponents were uneven. He had wise muscles, protected by years of work and good eating, the skills of use, the satisfactions of his time of life. He had three sons, only one of those baby brothers of mine lying awake to listen. His swaying body knew it loved me as his father had loved him, the woman carrying her child on a belly or breast, the man taking his son only

at the eye or the fist. There must have been a great satisfaction in his fear and love at that moment.

My sole weapon was exactly my dissatisfaction. My father's arms swam with veins among the curled oily hairs on his light bluish freckled flesh. No bow-straight shoulders like Atlas the World's Most Perfect Develop It! No Culver Academy athlete calling for Pattie Donahue in his uniform at Christmastime! It was a body which had worked well and been used with pleasure, a happy body, soup on the pants, making its own purpose and content with this.

Mine, as I have said: discontented. I looked for a use for it. I said: "And you and your grocery boys and everyone! *I hate you!*"

Mother was crying and stacking the dishes in the sink when his open hand—generous! open!—struck my shoulder. I flew back and then up at him, slipping past his collar rough as a dog's tongue. Mother screamed. I climbed him, flailing; he was planted on the floor and he rocked under my weight for a moment, both of us silently straining toward each other and apart, our sweat pouring together while Mother screamed on and on—the malignant smell of hate and fear becoming the myrrh of two men fighting, the sweet cunning of love and death. I clung to his great neck to strangle it. His beard scratched my arms. He hugged my ribs, forcing them up—cracking!—pushing my hair out, lengthening my bones, driving my voice deep. Savagely he told me his life, wringing my childhood from me. I took this after his long day and had nothing to give in return but my unfleshed arms roped about his neck. We embraced like this.

The broken blood fled for a window into my mouth. I felt myself fainting.

Abruptly I lunged down, perhaps permitted to beg free. His weighty old-country strength: my agile sporting slyness: as he glanced for pity at my mother I threw myself like a pole against his knees in a playground stunt performed without thinking. The trick uprooted his legs; he crashed; his forehead above the unsurprised Tartar eyes hit my mother's foot when he fell.

He sat up and started to his feet as she held him. I could not breathe, my chest frozen. I turned from his sprawling. I let him hear me choke

and then ran to my room. Yes, I had wanted to win, but now, fatalistic, in an instant guessing ahead, I made the highest demand on a father: that he know he had beaten me too, only because he had let it happen.

"What's happening to us all?"—those first tears of old age. "What's happening to us?" Dad was crying in the bathroom with the door shut and the water running in the sink so that no one would hear an old man with an ingrate son. He had locked Mother out, who was dry-eyed now, figuring.

*If I am bereaved of my sons,* the first Jacob said, *then am I bereaved.* To fight back was all I needed: he had given too much. Economy in Pattie! my father a spendthrift!—such knowledge comes late to me now.

*Edward T. Cone*

# THE OLD MAN'S TOYS: VERDI'S LAST OPERAS

## I

It is now clear that Verdi was one of the giants. Thanks to recent performances, new recordings, and reprinted scores, we can observe in detail the slow and steady growth from youthful rawness through the vigor of the middle period to the refined splendor of *Aïda*—an advance predictable enough for a composer of Verdi's obvious musical gift. The final step, however—to *Otello* and *Falstaff*—could have been taken only by an imaginative intellect of the highest order. But the praise which it is now fashionable to bestow on these works is often grudgingly qualified. The critic may not go so far as Stravinsky, who for his own obvious purposes sees *Rigoletto* and *Traviata* as representing the high point of Verdi's art; but he often agrees with Shaw that in *Otello* and *Falstaff* subtlety has replaced melodic inspiration, and he considers the latter opera, for all its beauties, a meaningless puppet show, written for an old man's amusement.

Verdi himself suggested this point of view. His letters[1] indicate

[1]The English translation of the letters is that of Franz Werfel and Paul Stefan in *Verdi, the Man in His Letters* (New York, L. B. Fischer, 1942). The chief Italian source is *I Copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi*, ed. G. Cesari and A. Luzio (Milan, 1913). All the letters quoted in this essay are to be found there, except the one to Cammarano suggesting the libretto of *Il Trovatore*, which is reprinted in Gino Marchese Monaldi's *Verdi* (2nd ed., Turin, 1921).

that he was so afraid of making any commitments which his advanced age might not allow him to fulfill, that he protected himself by pretending that *Falstaff* was "a mere pastime." To Boïto, his librettist, he writes: "Did you ever think of my huge accumulation of years? . . . I could be accused of great rashness, if I were to undertake such a task. And suppose I could not master my weariness? Suppose I could not finish the music? Then you would have your time and pains for nothing!" To the Mayor of Parma he admits, "I am writing *Falstaff*, it is true. But I am writing it in moments of absolute leisure, simply for my own amusement, and without any definite goal in view; and I do not know whether or when I shall finish it." The cat is out of the bag, though, when he confesses to Gino Monaldi that "for forty years now I have been wanting to write a comic opera, and for fifty years I have known *The Merry Wives of Windsor*." The old man's toy was the consummation of a half-century's desire.

Such long-range plans are not unusual with Verdi, and they indicate from almost the earliest days a seriousness of purpose which refutes the conception of the young composer as a mere tunemonger. They suggest also that we must respect the earlier works as rougher embodiments of the same musical and dramatic conceptions which are found, refined and freed of inessentials, in the later masterpieces. Verdi himself respected them; his careful revision of *Macbeth* for the Paris performance proves it. *Macbeth* had been written in 1847—even before *Luisa Miller*; the new version was prepared in 1865—three years after *La Forza del Destino*. Yet his correspondence at this period reveals the liveliest interest in the new production; he was determined that it should be as musically and dramatically effective as possible. More remarkable still is the rewriting of *Simone Boccanegra* after twenty-four years. Originally the product of his first mature period, it became an important link between *Aïda* and *Otello*, and marked the composer's first collaboration with the librettist of his last great works.

A real collaboration it remained, for no other composer since Mozart worked so intimately with his poets. Although he never wrote a libretto, Verdi was always a dramatist; and although he was

no philosopher, his opera was from the beginning based on a sound aesthetic. If we fail to comprehend it, or even to admit its existence, we shall continue to be troubled by the apparent contrivance of *Otello* and the meaninglessness of *Falstaff*.

II

One approach to the understanding of what Verdi was trying to do is suggested by a consideration of the charge that the style of the late works is a result of waning inspiration, that artifice has replaced creativity. Shaw thought this was true already in *Aïda* and attributed the richness of that opera's orchestration to the composer's attempt to make up for "the inevitable natural drying up of . . . spontaneity and fertility."[2] But in actuality, what we find in these works is not less invention, but more. The melody, it is true, is contented with single periods or even phrases (Falstaff's "*Te lo cornifico, netto, netto,*" Ex. 1) where the melody of *Il Trovatore* would have demanded an aria; but what would have been the construction of such an aria?

Ex. 1

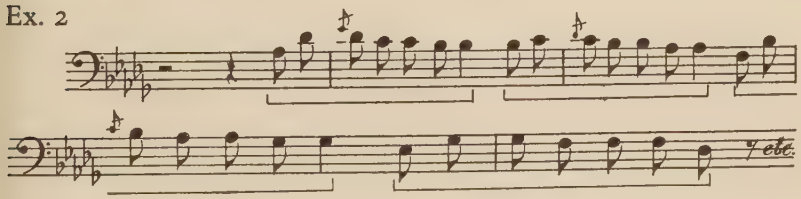
Look at "*Di quella pira,*" at "*La donna è mobile,*" at "*Di Provenza,*" and you will find that one motif—a single detail—is elaborated by sequential repetition and simple modifications to fill out the entire form. Fundamentally, the pregnant vocal fragments which carry the burden of the music in the later works are equivalent to these arias, with all such obvious development suppressed. Instead, the phrases are now subjected to real development: they appear in constantly new relations and in ever more varied forms. The "*cornifico*" motif referred to above (*Falstaff*, Act II, Scene 1) is not dropped after its initial presentation by Falstaff; it is kept as a constantly recurring thought beneath Ford's ensuing monologue. Two purely orchestral

[2]George Bernard Shaw, "A Word More About Verdi," in the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, March 1901, reprinted in *London Music in 1888–89* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 16.37)

statements of it introduce the arioso. The first ends on a simple tonic according to Falstaff's version; but the second leads to a dissonant deceptive cadence as the import of Falstaff's words begins to affect Ford—"*È sogno? o realtà.*" A little later, with completely altered harmonization leading into dark, abbreviated, chromatic sequences, it is reduced to only three tones, which in turn are used to form the crescendo to the outburst "*O matrimonio: Inferno!*" The composer returns to the device of the deceptive cadence (in a more startling form) as Ford imagines the dreaded words "*Le corna,*" and from the original motif he derives the persistent triplet rhythm which remains throughout the rest of the passage. The fullest development is reached when, accompanying "*Prima li accoppio/E poi li colgo,*" the little melody ascends through four octaves to break out in a newly truncated version which produces the exciting effect of simultaneous stretto and diminution. This marks the last appearance of the "*cornifico*"; from here on it is present only by implication in the triplets of the accompaniment.

Such is the rich orchestral treatment Verdi affords a simple cadential phrase. Other melodies, destined for purely vocal expansion, display a flexibility of line, a variety of contour, and a rhythmic subtlety unknown to his earlier style. Beautiful as "*Di Provenza*" is (*La Traviata*, Act II), it consists of the unvarying repetition of a single rhythmic element, broken only at the final cadence (Ex. 2). Melodically, it outlines the simplest of stepwise motions, both in its

Ex. 2



individual phrases and in the relation of one phrase to the next. Against this, a fair example of its period, set Desdemona's opening appeal in Act III of *Otello* (Ex. 3). Here the second half of the initial phrase corresponds rhythmically to the first half, it is true; but the

syncopation, serving to accent the climactic F sharp, adds new potential energy which is admirably discharged by the embellished cadence. Now this phrase as a whole, consisting as it does of two symmetrical halves, is answered in Otello's part by one of equal length, but indivisible. A short digression is offered by Otello's next phrase, one of only three measures in contrast to the regular four of the first two. Finally, rounding off the tiny song-form, Desdemona repeats her opening melody in still another variation. Thus, although the opening motif has been heard four times, it is never rhythmically the same.

Ex. 3

Melodically, the passage displays equal subtlety. In the opening figure the line is progressing simultaneously on two levels: from the opening G sharp up and from the high E down—both leading to the closing B. In the repetition of the figure, the sixth thus defined is expanded to an octave, widening the compass of the melody and allowing for a longer, more elaborate fall to the cadential note. The two lines continue their way throughout the second phrase, which effects a modulation to the dominant; only in the truncated middle section, contrastingly characterized by a simple scale-progression, are they merged. The concluding section, again in the tonic, restores the two original levels in the expected reprise of the opening. Once more the high F sharp receives emphasis, this time by a poignant, dissonant leap which makes the closing descent to the tonic E doubly

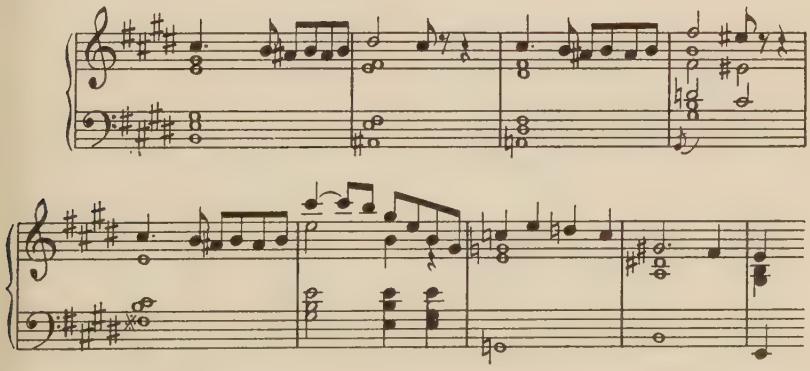
welcome. Such complex relations as these (I hardly touch on the harmonic details) indicate a concentration of expression beside which the more extended linear beauty of the earlier aria seems superficial.

Concentration—that is the clue. The aria of *La Traviata* is compressed into the short arioso passage of *Otello*. Even Mozart could never have achieved this, for Mozart's arias were already highly concentrated. They are longer than Verdi's arias because they contain so much more music—so many more ideas; but they are as concentrated as possible, and so they cannot be compressed. But Verdi's diluted arias contain much less music than their own space—so he learns concentration.

## III

Perhaps Wagner taught Verdi more than the latter realized: this concentration, for example, although it is sometimes hard to think of the long-winded German composer in this term. Yet his essential expression is one of highly charged detail; no one has ever packed more into a motif of two chords. Just here, though, one difference between the two musicians becomes clear: most of Wagner's expressive details are harmonic progressions; Verdi's are melodies. Even at his most nearly Wagnerian, in the "Kiss Motif" from *Otello* (Ex. 4), Verdi remains primarily a melodist. Striking as the chromatic chords are, the fragment must be characterized as a tune, complete and rounded off with a cadence. The other recurrent leitmotiv in the

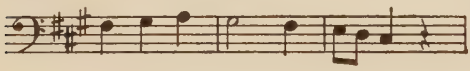
Ex. 4



opera, that of "Jealousy" (Ex. 5), although shorter and more amenable to orchestral development, is not even harmonized upon its first appearance: the orchestra merely doubles Iago's vocal line.

Interested as he was in the expressive possibilities of harmonic color, it was natural that Wagner should come to think more and more in terms of the orchestra, and that often his vocal parts should seem to be distracting adjuncts. On the other hand, it was impossible that Verdi, recognizing that melody and song are one, should forget

Ex. 5



the primary importance of the human voice. "Opera is opera, symphony is symphony": the warning was directed toward Puccini; but in thus summing up his aesthetic Verdi clearly showed what he must have considered the basic fallacy of his great German contemporary as well.

This is not to say that Verdi's orchestra is only an accompaniment. Already in the earlier operas, some of his most telling scenes are constructed around a primarily instrumental line: the meeting of Rigoletto and Sparafucile, the gaming scene in *La Traviata*. But he carefully observes the conditions which prevent the submersion of the voice, and in the Sparafucile scene we can see what these are. The orchestration, with its single muted cello and double bass projecting an unnaturally high melodic line against a background of plucked strings and woodwinds, is striking; but it is simple and remains almost unchanged throughout the scene. Once the listener has grasped the pattern, he can continue to perceive it almost subconsciously while he devotes his attention to the voices and the action. The melody itself, based upon easily remembered figures, is developed in the most unassuming manner; true symphonic style would create a texture so interesting and self-contained that it would completely absorb the ear. The vocal parts, recitative-like, contrast with the formal melodic structure of the accompaniment; but they never conflict rhythmically, for the broken vocal phrases and the smooth

instrumental ones coincide at the important cadences, such as those at Sparafucile's words "*un uom di spada sta*" and "*La vostra donna è là.*" At each of these points, the conclusion of an instrumental period is marked by a similar close in Sparafucile's part, further accented by an echoing interjection from Rigoletto. The voices thus become the irregular surface of a basically simple solid.

Verdi had only to refine this particular type of writing to achieve the miracle of Otello's "*Dio! mi potevi*" in Act III. In the declamatory opening, the musical burden is the orchestra's: the constantly varied reiteration of a single motif. The variations do not apply to the rhythm, however, where the rigidity sets off to advantage the free declamation of the vocal part. In the same way the subtle melodic changes of the orchestral figure contrast effectively with the voice's constant repetition of a single note. Each level—voice and orchestra —thus contains one static, monotonous element, as if to symbolize Otello's inability to free himself from his obsession. Three times Otello's part quits its reiterated A flat for a lower note; each time coincides with a cadential point in the accompaniment. Finally, as the motif disappears in a modulation effected by an unusual deceptive cadence, the voice too surprises us by rising to a startling C natural —and the recitative is over. Here is a point at which the earlier Verdi would have introduced an aria, for the orchestra has borne the weight of the melody long enough. The late Verdi also gives us an aria here—short, asymmetrical, interrupted by dramatic exigency (the entrance of Iago), but an aria which proceeds to a satisfying conclusion at "*Cielo! O gioa!*"

In Wagner, as in Verdi, when we expect an aria we are given one —but by the orchestra, not the singer. Such a place is Brünnhilde's plea in the last act of *Die Walküre*, where the tension of the dialogue beginning with "*War es so schmählich*" is finally released in the passage beginning "*Der diese Liebe.*" It is just at this point, however, that the orchestra achieves its greatest eloquence, and its transformation of the earlier tentative "Motif of Pleading" into a definitive major form (sometimes called "The Beginning of a New Life") requires our total attention.

Verdi helps his voices to maintain their supremacy by orchestration

which is transparent even at its most opaque; to do so he learns to produce the most startling effects by the most economical means. This tendency is already apparent in *Rigoletto*—in the Sparafucile scene described above, with its unearthly duet of cello and double bass, and in the last act, when the oboe interjects its solitary high tones over the empty fifths of the lower strings. Here is another aspect of the composer's desire for concentration: not of sheer mass, as in Wagner, but of what might be called orchestral attention. The entire effect of the instrumentation is focused in one salient detail, to which all others are subordinated.

Increased mastery of this technique leads to the glowing translucency of *Aïda*. The Nile scene is famous for its coloring; yet the score reveals nothing but a single flute accompanied by muted strings in the simplest of patterns. Even this economy is carried still further in *Otello*, where all the evil of Iago's character can be compressed into a single unison on the strings, and in *Falstaff*, where two simple harmonics on the violins transform Nannetta's village children into the actual fairies they pretend to be.

## IV

Looking at the same material in a slightly different way, I should say that Verdi at all times adheres closely to the two human sources of music: song and dance. When the voice is not predominant the body is. Such passages as those analyzed in the preceding section, in which the orchestra temporarily usurps primary interest and attention, are characterized by easily grasped rhythms suggestive of physical motion and thus referring to the human characters on the stage.

The third source of music, the nonhuman one increasingly drawn upon by Wagner as he develops from *Das Rheingold* to *Parsifal*, is pure sound. This is a new ideal which becomes increasingly important during the nineteenth century, as interest focuses more and more on the coloristic motif, which in turn points the way toward the single, highly expressive chord. Although in Wagner, a product of the German symphonic tradition, such moments of emphasis are still tightly controlled in the total flux, the intrinsic value of each is more important than its contribution to the whole. It is only a step

further to Debussy, who isolates them against a colorful but static background. The detail has become disintegrative, and the musical line is lost.

Verdi, even in his last works, refused to yield to this, the great temptation of the late nineteenth century. As a writer for the stage, and therefore for human beings, he knew that the path of pure musical color, of overindividualized chord or motif, leads to dehumanization. Although the style of *Otello* and *Falstaff*, a style stripped bare of all but essentials, became at times one of expressive detail, the details remained primarily melodic and always constructive, contributing to the continuous progress of the musical line, which in turn, as context, gave meaning to the details.

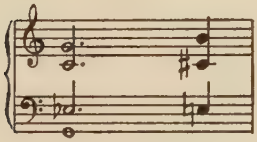
It is therefore easy to see why the concept of the leitmotiv should remain foreign to Verdi, and why he should use it only rarely. For the Wagnerian leitmotiv is independent of its surroundings to the extent that it can be freely transplanted without losing its effect. Even when Verdi does invent a movable phrase, such as the "Oath" in *Don Carlo*, the "Kiss Motif" mentioned above, and the "*Reverenza*" figure in *Falstaff*, he introduces it sparingly. More frequently a motif will be used to characterize a single scene, never to reappear. Themes like these are meaningful in one context alone; they fit only one situation. In *Otello*, the "handkerchief" scene and the "*Credo*" of Iago furnish examples. Going one step further, Verdi occasionally places at a climactic point a short expressive figure which occurs once only—a detail which has found its unique place in the complete flow and which can be subject neither to repetition nor to development. A phrase like Desdemona's almost hysterical farewell to Emilia is poignant only because of its position in the complete structure of the scene (Ex. 6). The instrumental introduction and

Ex. 6

the "Willow Song" which precede it have vacillated between major and minor, between a clearly harmonic and a modal tonality of

F sharp; now Desdemona's outburst resolves all doubts in a perfect major cadence. Heard in isolation, and thus unable to perform its function of discharging the tension so long sustained in the previous passage, it sounds commonplace. In contrast, a much shorter figure like "Treachery by Magic" (Ex. 7) from *Die Götterdämmerung*—only two chords—can weave its spell in any context or in none. Its own sound is sufficient.

Ex. 7



It is Verdi's achievement of emphatic moment without sacrifice of temporal span which today attracts the attention of those composers for whom pure sound is no longer enough. Sheer sonority can neither organize a large-scale instrumental work nor present human action in terms of the human voice. The colorful detail must take its place in the complete musical phrase, and the phrase must contribute to the unfolding of the complete line. These are the principles, stated in the quartets and sonatas of the aging Beethoven, which were rediscovered two generations later, for a different medium, by the old Italian.

V

Hermann Broch, writing about Homer,[3] suggests that one of the characteristics of the "style of old age" is an apparent preoccupation with matters of technique. This preoccupation is only apparent, he insists, even though it may deceive the artist himself. "Although the artist's problem seems to be mainly technical, his real impulse goes beyond this"; the true goal is "the reaching of a new level of expression." Technique and expression—these terms are more suggestive than the familiar "form" and "content." Too often the latter encourage the picture of form as a handily constructed vessel into which

[3] In his introduction to Rachel Bespaloff's *On the Iliad* (New York, Pantheon, 1947).

the content can then be poured. Technique, on the other hand, implies the living development of expressive means; and expression indicates the activity of a total organism rather than a mere "containable" substance. The compression of Verdi's last period, like that of Beethoven's, is not of formal interest only; it allows the composer to achieve an intensity—a realism, if you will—impossible in a more relaxed style. It is this intensity, transferred by association from the music to the characters on the stage, which endows them with an almost terrifying vitality. They become real in a sense unknown to the spoken drama; for a music-dramatist is able to endow his creatures with a new dimension through a dual control of the temporal continuum in which they move: as a dramatist, he uses this time as a natural physical fact; as musician, he manipulates, even distorts it, to form a vehicle for psychological expression. In a word, he turns time into tempo.

I have called Verdi a music-dramatist rather than an opera-composer precisely because of this control of both verbal time and musical tempo. In discussing the expressive goals of his works for the stage, I might even go so far as to say that he always wrote his own libretti—not as Wagner did, completing the actual labor of versification, but as Mozart did, working constantly and intimately with a professional of the craft. The composer's early correspondence with the librettists Cammarano and Piave makes clear to what a great extent he was responsible for the choice and shaping of his own plays. *Il Trovatore*, for example, seems to have been first suggested to Cammarano in a note written by Verdi early in 1850: "The subject I should like and which I suggest is *El Trovador*, a Spanish drama by Gutierez. It seems to me very fine, rich in ideas and in strong situations. I should like to have two feminine roles. First, the gypsy, a woman of unusual character after whom I want to name the opera. The other part for a secondary singer." Over a year later, after having received Cammarano's sketch for the play, he writes him again, dissatisfied: "It seems to me, if I am not deceived, that several situations no longer have the force and originality they had, and above all, that Azucena has not retained her strange and novel character. It seems to me that this woman's two great passions, *filial love* and

*maternal love*, are no longer present with all their original force." There ensues a detailed criticism of Cammarano's version, followed by a scene-by-scene sketch of Verdi's own conception of the proper treatment. Equally interesting in this regard are Verdi's letters to Cammarano and later to Somma outlining his plans for an opera on *King Lear*. Here the composer indicates not only the succession of act and scene, but the exact pattern of recitative, aria, and ensemble as well, with prescriptions of the proper poetic meters at important points.

Much as we owe to Boïto, then, for the specific form of *Otello* and *Falstaff*, we must not overestimate his contribution—Shaw again to the contrary; and in what follows, I attribute to Verdi the specifically dramatic content of the two works as unreservedly as their musical treatment. Nevertheless, he was fortunate in finding a librettist who, as a skillful opera-composer in his own right, had first-hand experience of the problems involved. As a result, Verdi was no doubt willing to entrust to Boïto details of the poetic composition which he would have felt bound to supervise in the case of men like Cammarano and Piave.

The books of the two works prove that Boïto was sensitive to the difference between the problems presented by each. In *Otello* a great opera is made from a great play; in *Falstaff* an equally great opera from an obviously inferior play. The translation into the new medium must in one keep as much of the original content as possible; in the other, a new content must be provided. The libretto of *Otello* is fundamentally an abbreviated version of Shakespeare; to a certain extent *Falstaff* is a new play.

Naturally, each presents the composer with difficulties, but in some ways *Otello* lays upon him the heavier burden. Most good operas have libretti which are comparatively barren of poetry, of imagery, and of philosophical content. The music is free to add the poetry, to create its own imagery, to imply its own meanings. A play like *Othello*, still a tightly poetic drama even in Boïto's denuded version, necessarily limits the possibilities of musical interpretation. Yet the boundaries are not too strict; the composer has after all at least as much freedom as the actor in his reading of the lines, and what

Verdi has done is once and for all to fix securely his own reading of the parts. Thus his version is susceptible of much less variety in performance than Shakespeare's play, a rule generally applicable to musical as opposed to spoken drama.

A single example should make this principle clear. Act III, Scene 2 in the opera is a condensation of Shakespeare's Act III, Scene 4 and Act IV, Scene 2. Verdi indicates, by returning at the end of the scene to the suave opening melody, that Otello tries to conceal his fury under a veil of mock politeness. The appearance of the dissonant chord and the rise of the voice to high C on the dreaded word "*cortigiana*" evince his momentary loss of control; but he recovers sufficiently to finish the phrase on a note of suppressed menace, his true desperation breaking out in the immediately ensuing orchestral passage. The details of the music force this interpretation, but the corresponding lines in the play allow varying ones. (Paul Robeson, for instance, delivered them in a bellow of uncontrolled anger.) Verdi's interpretation has the added advantage that it permits him to round off the scene formally by a return to the original theme as suggested in the libretto by Otello's reference to Desdemona's hand, echoing his opening line. This repetition does not occur in the original, where the scenes are too far apart for such a device to be effective; moreover, it is a technique suited rather to musical than to purely dramatic form.

The foregoing discussion applies to passages which are essentially similar in opera and play. Sometimes, however, the poetry of the original is reduced almost to a bare skeleton—or omitted completely. One or the other is necessary if the music is to be allowed to supply its own imagery; for if the composer tried to underline and intensify Shakespeare's already heavy-laden verse, the action would be slowed down to such a degree that the opera would become impossibly long. The only alternative—merely to set the words in a purely declamatory style—would be a surrender of the musician's function. So most of the poetry has to go out of the window—only to enter again through Verdi's door. No trace of Othello's long soliloquy before the murder of Desdemona remains in the libretto. Instead, the double basses introduce an orchestral recitative, short but eloquent, and

serving a similar purpose. The relation of "kiss" and "kill," put into words by Shakespeare in his last scene, is here already made apparent by Verdi in the subtle transformation of the ominous double-bass melody into the "Kiss Motif" from the love-scene of the first act. But even Verdi would have found it an impossible task to translate into his own language the constant play on the word "light" in the original. Any attempt to reproduce this image musically, within the time allowed by his operatic economy, would have been ludicrous; the speech had to be omitted.

The problem of translation, arising in an opposite sense, also helps explain the presence of certain passages in the opera which are not found in Shakespeare at all. It is an important principle of music-drama that every important motivation must at some point be translated into musical terms. It cannot merely be talked about, or acted: it must be heard as music. That is why Verdi requires a love-scene in his first act. What Shakespeare tells us through his poetry, and by the action of his own first act, Verdi must have a chance to convey musically. In the case of *Otello*, a fairly long scene is required; only with *Falstaff* does the composer learn to compress the love duet into fifty short measures.

Similarly, the famous '*Credo*', an invention of Boïto's, is necessary in order to give the music a chance to express fully the chief dramatic motivation of the play: the character of Iago. The soliloquy which concludes Shakespeare's first act will not do; it is too complicated, mixing self-revelation, self-justification, and plot-development. It could be set only as a pure recitative, but the characterization would then be lost or only imperfectly translated into music. The Credo takes its cue from Shakespeare's last lines:

> Hell and night
> Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

These it expands into a speech permitting a terrifying musical interpretation of Iago, one that gives him stature as one of the great operatic villains, all of whom have revealed themselves in similar monologues: the Queen of the Night, Pizarro, Kaspar, and Hagen.

In the examples just pointed out poet and composer have had to expand certain passages of the original in order to convey them adequately in musical terms. It has often been stated, on the other hand, that one technique peculiar to opera facilitates a condensation of dramatic expression: the ensemble. The concerted singing of several characters makes possible the simultaneous presentation of contrasting points of view which in a play can be made clear only successively. The septet with chorus near the end of Act III of *Otello* achieves an intensity unknown at the corresponding point of the original (Act IV, Scene 1), with the innocence of Desdemona soaring above the pity of her friends, the plotting of the conspirators, and the horror of the crowd. But unanimity of purpose is equally well adapted to this technique, as the oath-duet of Otello and Iago testifies. *Falstaff*, even more advanced than the earlier work, presents double and triple ensembles in which the unanimity of one group of characters is contrasted with that of another. The nine-part ensemble of Act I, Scene 2 divides itself into four (the women, rapid six-eight meter) plus four (the men, rapid two-two) plus one (Fenton, sustained two-two). The finale of the second act presents Nannetta and Fenton as one unit, the three plotting women together with Falstaff as another, Ford and the other men as a third, and the chorus as a fourth. The group-contrasts essential to both these passages are nicely resolved in the final fugue of the last act—probably the best formal device available to indicate general acceptance of the outcome without loss of the individuality of each character.

## VI

What is this outcome, which all accept with the words "*Tutto nel mondo è burla*"?[1] Is it Verdi's final judgment that all are "*gabbati*"?[2] Most critics have taken him at his word and find in *Falstaff* a trivial comedy adorned with some exquisite music. But such an interpretation is not substantiated by the libretto as a whole, differing in so many important respects from the original farce. Furthermore, such

[1]Everything in the world is a joke.
[2]One of the closing lines of the opera i.e. "*Tutti gabbati*": All are taken in.

a point of view implies a misunderstanding of the nature of music-drama, comprehension of which cannot be derived from a reading of the book alone. In any opera, we may find that the musical and the verbal messages seem to reinforce or to contradict each other; but whether the one or the other, we must always rely on the music as our guide toward an understanding of the composer's conception of the text. It is this conception, not the bare text itself, that is authoritative in defining the ultimate meaning of the work. And the music of *Falstaff* suggests a great deal more than "he who laughs last laughs best."

In the first place, the terrifying reality of Ford's jealousy, as portrayed in his "*È sogno? o realtà*," is sufficient proof that Verdi did not regard his characters as mere puppets. This is the same music that Otello sings—and this same motive reaches far into Verdi's past. *Don Carlos*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Aïda*—all turn upon sexual jealousy. Even earlier, jealousy enters into the motivations of *Ernani*, *La Traviata*, and *Il Trovatore*. But in the two late works the emotion has acquired a moral aspect: the husband's sense of right and wrong has been outraged by the supposed conduct of his wife. (To a certain extent this motive is foreshadowed in *Un Ballo*.) This dimension is natural in *Otello* because it is basic to the Shakespearean original, but it is surprising to find it contributing equal intensity to Ford's emotions. In either case, it would have been easy for Verdi to create effective melodrama without this added depth, but he goes further and thus makes a tragic hero of Otello—and almost of Ford.

The comparison of Ford with Otello suggests another apparent similarity between the two situations: the guiltlessness of the woman involved. But whereas Mistress Ford is a virtuous wife, Desdemona is innocent in the complete meaning of the word. The innocent heroine is a recurring character in Verdi's dramatic mythos. Untouched by evil, her chastity is usually symbolized physically by some sort of cloister. Gilda, who is eventually betrayed by her own ignorance of the world, is shielded by Rigoletto's garden wall. Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and her namesake in *La Forza del Destino* both find refuge in convents. Even Violetta, by no means innocent, tries to escape into a secluded village. Here I find the explanation of

the scene in *Otello* during which the village children sing and dance around Desdemona. The division of Desdemona in the courtyard from Otello and Iago in the house presents a visual separation of her innocence from their guilt; the presence of the children heightens the irony of the scene.

In *Falstaff* it is Nannetta who is the innocent one, and on two occasions physical objects symbolize her separation from the world around her: the groves which hide the lovers in the garden-scene, and the screen in the bedroom. It is noteworthy that Verdi, writing to his stage designer, makes special mention of these two details, even drawing sketches of the stage. "Lots of plants and bushes here and there, so that the people can hide themselves," he specifies; and "This screen, so to speak, takes part in the action and must be put where the action requires." But the bushes and the screen differ from all the other cloisters in an important respect: they hide, not just Nannetta, but Fenton as well. For once in Verdi youthful innocence is represented by a pair of lovers rather than by a lone maiden, and for once love is pursued to a happy ending.

The identification of this series of heroines is confirmed by the music they sing. Particularly do the Leonora of *La Forza*, Desdemona, and Nannetta seem to be successive incarnations of the same voice—a clear sustained soprano, rising above all the surrounding agitation. What Verdi hinted at in the earlier Leonora's counterpoint to the Miserere, he carried out in the second Leonora's "*Madre pietosa*," soaring against the chanting of the monks. A more complex form of the same technique is prophesied in the *Rigoletto* Quartet, to be fulfilled in the two great ensembles of *Otello*, where Desdemona detaches herself from the accompanying voices and creates her own melodic line in lonely beauty. In *Falstaff* Fenton takes this role in the first big ensemble; but in the bedroom-scene he is joined by Nannetta, and through all the succeeding hurly-burly the love-duet behind the screen proceeds undisturbed. In one other case Verdi contrasts united lovers with the outer world in this way—the finale of *Aïda*—but here the union is achieved only in death. In *Falstaff*, the old man, gentler, permits the lovers to escape into a world of their own making.

Let me carry this one step further—into the last act, when Nannetta appears as the Queen of the Fairies (a role assigned to Mistress Quickly in the original). The music that she sings here is not unlike that which has characterized her throughout, but lighter, daintier, less solid. Her separation from the real world, already prepared in the passages previously pointed out, is now complete; contrasting, earthly counterpoint is no longer present. She has become the fairy she is pretending to be, and the elves she summons are real elves. The magical orchestration of the passage insures the transformation.

It should be noticed in this connection that Nannetta herself takes no part in the pinching and beating of Falstaff, for she does not exist in the same world as the imps to whom this mission is entrusted. The latter are certainly only townspeople in disguise; and even Nannetta's band, after their leader's departure, are gradually drawn into the general fray. It is evidently in Nannetta alone that the power of transmutation inheres, and if the pretended fairies become temporarily real ones through her innocence, so too does the pretended wedding become a real one for her. Once more music reveals the truth: the gently solemn epithalamium is obviously not for Bardolfo and Cajus, but for Nannetta and Fenton. That is why it is heard again, a little later, when the young couple pleads for Ford's forgiveness. And though they may join in the fellowhip of the final "*Tutto nel mondo è burla,*" they at least have not been "*gabbati.*"

I have said little about the character of Falstaff himself and about the broad humor which is the opera's most obvious characteristic, not because they are inessential, but because they are fully treated in most criticisms of the work. What is not usually mentioned is that the complete content involves a basic contrast. On the one hand is the world of fighting and clowning, of appetites and revulsions, of plots and counter-plots. Its depths are indicated by the darkness of Ford's jealousy; but its true representative is Falstaff himself, for "*l'uom è nato burlone.*" Exaggerated in size and exaggerated in his actions, Falstaff is nevertheless recognized by the others as a mirror of themselves; as Alice points out to Ford and Cajus, all of them are wearing horns. For this reason they accept him wholeheartedly, even after brutally punishing him; and quite properly he becomes their

leader in the final ensemble to proclaim that laughter is the only solution to his world's problems. But there is another world: that of Fenton and Nannetta, which they create for themselves. Its symbol is Nannetta's fairyland, and into its unreality the lovers are able, for a little while, to escape. But they recognize that even they must eventually come to terms with the others, that the claims of ordinary society are imperative: so they too carry their parts in the final fugue.

There is evidence that Verdi wanted to set *The Tempest*. Perhaps he did—in *Falstaff*. All that he had learned during his lifelong exploration of the darker side of human emotions and passions, he had compressed into the four concise acts of *Otello*; now at last, for the first time, he was able to give this knowledge its proper place in a larger view—much as Shakespeare had done in his own last play. But the resemblances between *The Tempest* and *Falstaff* extend even to details. The ugliness of the world opposed to the strange beauties of the fairy island, the secluded maiden united with her suitor by a kind parent, the contrasting scenes of buffoonery, the interpenetration of dream and reality: all these elements of the one Verdi was able to suggest in the other. Most important, the spirit of wise good humor is always present. The day of the premiere Verdi wrote to Bellaigue, the French critic, "I don't know whether I have hit the gay note, the true note, and above all the sincere note." It is clear today that he hit all three—or rather that all three are really one.

A good part of the work on this issue of *Perspectives* was done in Europe—in Italy, England, and France—and a little of it in Egypt and Lebanon: that is to say, with the sound of foreign thoughts and tongues whirring in the ears and with alien modes of thought and idioms of expression impossible of intimacy echoing just at the threshold of perception. The circumstance could not have been more propitious to maintain hope with regard to each contribution taken separately and at the same time to rouse a deep and healthy distrust of success for the collective intention of the whole issue.

One sees afresh how it is that intellect and imagination everywhere struggle always in the quicksand, and one understands with new force the meaning of the phrase—*pas de salle*—which Remy de Gourmont prefixed to one of his series of *pensées*. And one understands, too, why Mr. Eliot once observed that in editing his magazine *The Criterion* he thought of his contributors as dining with the opposition. It is by such perceptions and by such hospitalities that one comes to experience under contrary intellectual formulations—or refusals to formulate—the common substance of thought. *Omnis intellectus omniformis est*. But it is not every mind meaning this mind

here and that mind there, it is every mind meaning the human mind itself that is omniform and must seek every possible form of expression—thereby adding, however impermanently yet poignantly, to the sum of creation; and thereby knowing that every individual must do the job over again, in token form, in his own life but that he cannot do it at all without the co-operation of cultures he only partly grasps and of ideas of which he misses the original point. There is Yorkminster, the Basilica at Ravenna, and the ever-suspended mud of the Nile. Every race loves its own forms of violence and its own hopes for mercy, and every race distrusts both the forms of intellect and the forms of humility of races other than its own. There is an anarch in each of us with respect to the rest of us.

It would seem—reading proofs of different articles in different cities and with the burr of different tongues in the ear—that every country makes a Babel of its own and that no Babel is to be understood except by the angel of the imagination, that is to say when translated to the voice of the Muse. No wonder the Muse both haunts us and raises a vertigo within us, the two together, as Dante says, the "war both of the journey and the pity—*la guerra si' del cammino e si' della pietate*." Thus, looking at the series of contributions to this issue, and listening to its Babel all at once, one realizes how many wars—how many journeys and how many forms of pity—cry in the one American voice. One sees why America is at the same moment both evangelical and frivolous, full of decorum and abandon, sober purpose and free humor, moved by traditions it does not know how to acknowledge and driven by immediate response, looking to uniformity and acting in diversity. One sees the half-acknowledged, half-transcended deep commitment to *several* of the older orders with which the world has met—and survived—the difficulties of existence. *Several* not *one* of the older orders. Henry Adams (whose life was a monument to the war of the journey and the pity) some fifty years ago, in one of his letters, saw this as well as anybody when he remarked that America was committed to the belief that no one form of the good was *necessarily* superior to any other form of the good. Adams was right. The preservation of choices—indeed it is in the Constitution as well—has been the unique risk of American

culture until this moment of history. America would not bet, like Pascal, on one God, but would risk it rather that in the Babel of this world only many gods and many voices can in the end come to sound one intelligible voice.

What that voice is no American knows, though each with singular uniformity insists on his own because he need not submit to any other. America has a republic of intellect based on a democracy of sensibility, and the one is constantly upsetting the other. Hence there has been a persistent confusion between American life and American thought, between American movement and the expression of that movement. Perhaps some European, more tenacious of life and more rebellious to tradition than Americans have yet had the need to be, could discern the nature of the underlying vital order that has kept American culture so buoyant and so amorphous. But he will have to struggle.

Certainly, in this issue, Mr. Niebuhr's Protestantism is not German, Mr. Bloom's synagogue is not Russian, Mr. Tate's Catholicism is no more European than his Southern individualism. Mr. Fergusson's many-voiced imagination is not Dante's, Mr. Cone's vision of freedom in economy of style is not Verdi's. And so on. From Europe America is "and so on." We are all et cetera; the other things going on. One would like to think that successive numbers of this journal might suggest successive formulations—none of them permanent—of the directions the American mind might take, meanwhile refusing it no lively choice. Et cetera.

**HOWE ON POWER**

**LEWIS ON FERGUSSON**

**GODOLPHIN ON LATTIMORE**

*The Encounter*

BY CRAWFORD POWER.

New York, 1950, William Sloane, $3.00. London, 1951, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 12/6.

*A Crisis of Conscience*

In the caves of Egypt, during the glory of primitive Christianity, the monks would stand through the nights in prayer, curbing their malice with bodily mortification. Had Father Cawder lived in that era of ecstasy, he would surely have stood among them, blistering his feet on the hot sands and freezing them on cold rocks; but it was his misfortune to be born in a later age, the age of modern skepticism, when the faith is weak and, even in its occasional strength, corrupted by comfort. Father Cawder is the central figure of *The Encounter*, a first novel published four years ago, written by a new but not young novelist, and neglected by public and critics with uniform obtuseness. The book sold meagerly, received hardly a review in the serious journals; yet I would suggest that in some later reckoning it will seem one of the few remarkable novels written in America during the past decade.

Its immediate token of excellence is its highly individual cut: too strong and harsh to be called a novel of sensibility, too delicate and analytical to be called a naturalistic novel, and so free from parochial accents as to be something more than a religious novel. Its hero, to be sure, is a Catholic priest, his agon a crisis in conscience, his antagonists members of his own faith; but the book does not smell of the tract and its meanings easily break past the bounds of dogma. *The Encounter* is one of the few

contemporary American novels which not merely command a strong emotional response—that would not be unusual—but what is much rarer, engage in sustained reflection of a serious order; it does not ask the reader, in the usual American fashion, to check his mind at the door.

Father Cawder is a man of extreme dedication: he believes in the truth of God's word, scorns the paltriness of mundane affairs, acknowledges the worm in man's soul. His own dry worm thrives in the close air of righteousness and self-abasement. First seen in painful tea-time colloquy with a parishioner, the comfortable and comfort-loving Mrs. Girard, Father Cawder appears to be following "some fast of his own invention, a private prohibition of cucumbers." When Mrs. Girard offers to donate pew cushions to his church (God, she supposes, gains no satisfaction from bruised knees), Father Cawder declines her gift: "It seems to me the Church ought to be kept clear of this cult of comfort. Christians are getting to be very soft."

Bony and graceless, his body recalling "the violated ugliness of a headless fowl," Father Cawder has eaten no meat for twelve years, and feels no difficulty in supposing that "a strict moralist . . . could find occasion of sin in a daily hot bath." Each of the opening chapters defines him through precise contrast: first with Mrs. Girard, agent of ease and affection; then with his assistant, Father Moran, keen to the uses of credit unions but dull to the spirit of Calvary; and then with his housekeeper, Mrs. McGovern, who represents a comic mixture of personal sloth and familiar Mariolatry, neither of which Father Cawder can much abide. In the abstract Father Cawder is right against all three, each of whom personifies some deviation from the faith into worldliness or sentimentality; in the life, his sin against them seems as large as theirs against the faith, for by his unmodulated insistence on the right he subtly violates their private integrities. He cannot see that there may be use, or even goodness, in Mrs. Girard's fondness for the small soothing niceties of custom, or in Father Moran's eagerness to root out poverty, or in Mrs. McGovern's tolerance of her own mediocrity. Life gives him too much offense. He believes that the world is merely a burden to be endured, not the natural residence of the soul.

Is there a sin that consists of nothing but constant concern about God? If so, it is Father Cawder's sin. In his youth, as a seminary student, he had been tempted by his friend, the Rev. Edmund Owen—"Ned" the Devil in ecclesiastic black—to "learn the degree of his favor with God." In later years, even as he realizes the enormity of this temptation, he continues to measure the purity of his faith; not for a moment can he lift God from his consciousness or forget the shamefulness of the pride that keeps Him there; he possesses all forms of piety except that "natural piety," that reverent ease before the objects of life, without which no man can safely make his way through the small, lacerating troubles of daily routine.

Yet what is most remarkable about Father Cawder is that he never proves deficient in self-scrutiny. He knows the

truth of all that may be said against him, and a good deal more as well; and because he knows that, even if denial is enjoined upon saints, his own denial is often a mask of pride, he mortifies himself all the more, thereby compounding the very sin from which he has striven to break loose; the extraordinary keenness of his self-perception thus becoming a goad to further presumption.

The consequence must be an awesome load of guilt: the guilt of being unable to live with one's guilt; the guilt of realizing that perhaps the greatest impertinence for a religious man is to assume that he, by himself, can support the full burden of his guilt. In a sense Father Cawder—this thought, at first, would appall him, and a moment later cause him to cry *Mea Culpa*—tries to compete with God; to assume an autonomy that, in the religious scheme, no man dare. His sinfulness he quickly grants; his unworthiness too; but the fact of limitation, the need to accept limitation as a step toward love of God, to accept limitation and yet not acquiesce in it—this is terribly hard. "It was proper," Father Cawder tells himself, "to be ready to accept the terms, the possible terms, of God without condition, like a child, like a servant attentive to the nod of his master." But even as he says this, indeed, because he feels the need to say it, Father Cawder belies his own statement. Such acceptance, for the truly religious man, is the ultimate test of belief, the penultimate mark of grace.

Father Cawder's crisis is brought upon him by a dream in which a circus diver named Diamond is revealed to him as his double. But can one trust a dream? Is it the signal of God or a trick of mania? Pride prompts Father Cawder to shun the dream as absurd; pride equally—for could not the diver "conceal under the disguise of a buffoon an experience of grace?"—leads him to search out Diamond and slowly penetrate the man's life. Nothing in Diamond seems promising or prepossessing: "he was merely mediocre, suspicious and lustful. He existed, according to the custom of the world, for the brief sensations of each day, the pleasures to be had in a woman's body, a soft bed, food and drink and pocket money. Like all the millions on the earth, a creature moved like a puppet by his appetites." *Like all the millions on the earth*—with this phrase of condescension Father Cawder would declare himself Diamond's superior. But in a fine symbolism, the affinity between the two men is quietly suggested. At the carnival where he and Mrs. Girard wait for Diamond to perform his stunt, Father Cawder tells her that he is "waiting for the dive."

> You like that sort of thing?
>
> I prefer it to the rest of this.
>
> Really? It seems so crazy, jumping all that distance. They always break their necks sooner or later, don't they? I find gambling much less of a bore.

In Father Cawder's preference for "the dive" we find the link between him and Diamond: a readiness to take chances, to "break their necks," as Mrs. Girard prudently remarks, "sooner or later." Though a mere "paltry foxlike tout of a man," Diamond immediately senses Father Cawder's weakness, as Smerdyakov senses the weakness of Ivan Karamazov; that, of course, is a

major function of the double in literature, to embody the qualities that lie dormant or hidden in the hero. But if Diamond thus brings to brazen light the element of mediocrity—a common, almost impersonal mediocrity shared by all men—which Father Cawder struggles so desperately and so foolishly to escape; he also personifies, in another part of himself, that willingness to live in the world which Father Cawder greatly lacks and scorns and needs. Between protagonist and double there is both a subtle congruity and a teasing incongruity; the development of their relationship forms the central action of the book.

Father Cawder's passion is God; Diamond's a former prostitute named Stella. For both, love aspires toward an act of possession; they cannot adore without wishing to appropriate. "I guess he's got his good points," says the tough-spirited Stella about Diamond, "but he's always at me. I'm getting good and sick of the way he is. He won't leave me be for a minute." The nagging jealousy with which Diamond bedevils his girl is a mundane equivalent of the tortured exaltation with which Father Cawder seeks his God. Father Cawder does not yet see this—it is one of the few things he does not see immediately—but he is nonetheless driven to involve himself more and more deeply in Diamond's affairs, helping to find a home for the child Stella and Diamond have left behind in a New Jersey brothel, becoming their human rather than priestly advisor.

In some subtle way Father Cawder betrays each of his friends: Mrs. Girard, by refusing her gestures of friendliness; Father Moran, by speaking of him in a tone of irony to their bishop; Stella, by presuming to lecture her on morals; and Diamond too. At the end of the novel, Diamond comes to Father Cawder's church seeking shelter: in a moment of jealousy he has murdered Stella, and now the police are upon him. Here Mr. Power faced some tempting dangers: sentimentality above all, but also routine piety. By his severe and unremitting honesty Mr. Power has escaped these dangers. Father Cawder does admit Diamond to sanctuary, but this, rather than providing a conventional resolution, sharpens their conflict and complicates their mutual suspicion. Father Cawder refuses to accept Diamond's shabby alibi, and with impressive dignity tells him: "I'm not compelled to believe what you say. Do you think only a man who speaks the truth can come into this house?"

Strong as this is, Diamond has the last word. "I can just about figure out what you're thinking," he tells Father Cawder. "If you'd been on hand . . . if you'd just done something you forgot to do, said a little prayer, she'd be alive yet . . . At first you had me fooled. But you can't stand to lose a trick, can you? You just can't stand to lose out, can you?" To this harsh and final judgment, a judgment which strips his most sacred office to its core of egotism, Father Cawder makes, significantly, no reply. Diamond, who cannot live in love, exposes Father Cawder's inability to live by it; the "foxlike tout of a man" has brought him face to face with the truth of himself.

When Diamond tries to escape from the church he is shot by the police, but for Father Cawder nothing is settled;

the act of giving sanctuary has proved no easy purgation for his soul. Now, however, he can draw up a precise balance sheet with himself: he does not love God, he does not fear God, yet he cannot believe in anything but God's existence. "I can envy the joy of those who love God, I who cannot even love another man." With God his struggle continues; with man it has ended. To have lived among men and yet not with them, was false; once close to them, even to such pitiable creatures as Diamond and Stella, he had involuntarily attempted a human relation and hoped for a human response; and in his failure with men he has seen the full measure of his failure with God. He is still cut off, this bony and anguished priest; but he knows where he is. Yet—one wonders—even in his final awareness does he not still suffer from his self-abasing pride? Nothing has changed; nothing is new but the ultimate and, for him, unusable knowledge that man's great weakness is the wish to be strong.

Crawford Power is a writer who leaves far behind the usual problems of the first novel: his book is neither autobiography nor a display of technique; his style is neither artless nor self-indulgent; his approach to his material is disciplined, rigorous, and austere. Perhaps the surest sign of his mastery is that he enforces his own pace upon the reader, requiring strict attention not because of external complications in syntax or diction but because of the density of his matter. Power has an extraordinary skill at shuttling between two vastly different environments, the bare room in which Father Cawder struggles with himself, and the tawdry streets of Trenton in which Diamond and Stella act out their melodrama. The prose of the novel is tense, dark, close-grained, though at times it seems so nervous and packed as to create friction with the narrative; here are a few typical sentences describing a trip through New Jersey:

> The car began to move faster, skirting a pasture where a flock of sheep was grazing. It took the incline of a concrete ramp. Raised now on stilts, the road lay across a marsh. Pools and shaggy grass wavered away out of sight toward a belt of clouds. The marsh at first was rank and green; further along it turned grey, heaped up in scaly folds. A yellow smoke rose from a crack in the shelving earth. . .

But the truly remarkable triumph of technique is that Power has managed to dramatize the long passages of Father Cawder's reflections, so that one may say of his writing, as Eliot says of Donne's, that his intellect seems at the tip of his senses. This is a rare gift in America, at least in twentieth-century America, where the intellect is greatly suspected and seldom employed by the novelist, and the viscera are believed most involved in the creation of art. Power is one of those rare novelists who can show a mind in motion, embodying its tangled impulses in a dialectic of clash and conversion; he has fully imagined the precise locations of his characters, so that there is no problem of false identification or of stacking emotional cards; in short, he is an artist of high gifts.

Nothing demonstrates this more than his delicacy and tact in handling the theme. He sees the faith in both its

glory and its squalor, yet the dizzying mixture of the two never betrays him into the sensationalism of Graham Greene or the snobbery of Evelyn Waugh; his moral seriousness, and something of his tone, warrant comparison with the work of François Mauriac. The skeptic can respond to *The Encounter*, I think, with the same degree of intensity as the religious reader, for in this novel there is no effort to jockey one into any belief, no effort to prove or refute anything. To credit the action and find it illuminating, one need not assent to the dogma or translate it into a dogma of one's own. For in the end, the language of art is always the same, and it is this language that Mr. Power speaks.

—*Irving Howe*

*The Idea of a Theater*

BY FRANCIS FERGUSSON.

Princeton, 1949, Princeton University Press, $3.75.

New York, 1953, Doubleday Anchor Books, $0.75.

*The Plots of Purgation*

Mr. Fergusson's book, short as it is (240 pages), gives us the richest and the most orderly—that is, the wisest—discussion of its subject that our present cultural circumstances are likely to permit. Its subject is not easy to define, partly as a result of those circumstances, and especially the worst of them: they seem always ready to smother the "idea" Mr. Fergusson works heroically to disclose. Modest subtitles announce the book's subject as "The Art of Drama in Changing Perspective," and as "A Study of Ten Plays." The plays include *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, *Bérénice*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Ghosts*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *The Infernal Machine*; and Mr. Fergusson studies them, one after the other in essays of remarkable power and cogency, with the aid of many varieties of criticism and scholarship—the *Poetics* of Aristotle, for example; the researches of Murray, Harrison and Cornford into the ritual bases of Greek tragedy; the notions about reality of St. Thomas Aquinas; Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*; the doctrines and the stray insights of Kenneth Burke and other modern American critics; the recorded contemporary experiences of the Moscow Art Theater, the Vieux Colombier, the Group Theater of New York; and his own talent for translating from several languages. The range is enormous, but the focus is always sharp. For Mr. Fergusson has written a book, not a series of essays; and his subject, beyond these plays and this scholarship, is something large, simple, and central: coextensive with whatever it is that underlies the plays and indeed the whole tradition of Western culture—with what that tradition is all about, and with what it assumes when it is about something else. His subject has to do with the natural history of the soul, with its characteristic journey towards the triumphant or desperate realization of its own essence; or rather, it has to do with the theatrical *forms* in which the creative imagination of the West has been able, at key moments, to dramatize that psychic action—to imitate it, to make it manifest and audible and so somehow to make it real.

It is essentially a purgatorial action,

with something to lose or shed and something to gain or grow; there are many, though not infinite, varieties of it; and Mr. Fergusson finds a number of them lying intact or mutilated beneath his dramatic paradigms. He watches them becoming actualized in the successive forms of plot, character, and language, with different degrees of completeness and success, not less in the adventures of Ibsen's Mrs. Alving and Eliot's Archbishop than in the adventures of Oedipus and Hamlet. The primary emphasis upon action reveals how much Mr. Fergusson has drawn upon (and meditated) Aristotle's definition of drama as the imitation, not of characters or of ideas, but of action: action which Mr. Fergusson in turn defines as "the movement or focus of the soul," and which he insistently distinguishes from the event, the incident, the deed—those being the results or the external signs of the action; those being, when arranged in what is called the "plot," precisely the mode of the *imitation* of the action. Racine, Mr. Fergusson believes, collapsed this distinction, which had held for both Sophocles and Shakespeare; and after the distinction was lost, it was only a step to the "well-made play," whereby the plot is not an imitation of the action at all, but a substitute for it, a distraction from it. Mr. Fergusson's effort to renew the ancient distinction is an effort to show how the energies which enter decisive moral change were the source—when seized upon and actualized—of the inviolable power of the great plays; and it is an effort to explain the absence of vitality in our contemporary theater generally and the presence of so much vitality (in Cocteau, in Obey) as there is.

Playwrights were able to perceive the action best and to discover best the forms by which it could be dramatized when they had the good fortune to live in an age which shared a common "idea" of a theater: an idea which of course presupposes a common notion about the desirable thrust of the human psyche. In this respect, according to Mr. Fergusson, Sophocles and Shakespeare were the most fortunately situated playwrights of all time. Sophocles was fortunate (more so, for example, than Euripides) because, when he wrote *Oedipus Rex*, drama and ritual were still very close to each other: so that the hero's story and the community's ritual celebration of the mystery of experience could be fused; the former could be recognized at once as the re-enactment of the latter—the action glowed and announced itself in the plot. Shakespeare was fortunate (more so, for example, than Racine) because, when he wrote *Hamlet*, enough of the medieval heritage still remained to provide him with a ritual form he could at once re-enact, parody, and appraise. The drama of Sophocles is consequently tidier, clearer, and firmer, the purgatorial experience alive in its every exclamation; that of Shakespeare is more many-sided and more loosely knit—it wobbles between ritual and realism, and the wobbling is converted into dramatic tension. *Oedipus Rex*, we might say, *is* the action as ritual; *Hamlet* is *about* that action, testing it, exploring it, speculating about it (and even about its dramatic possibilities).

Mr. Fergusson graphs the action, in its classic presentation by Sophocles, as

the motion of the soul from "purpose" to "passion" to "perception": a motion which appears, in actuality, as that from the rational purpose of discovering the murderer of the king and the polluter of the city; to the suffering aroused because of the search—the grief, the anger, the terror; to the perception of the true state of affairs, the true identity of Oedipus, the true nature of power. In an extraordinarily subtle analysis, Mr. Fergusson reveals the action being actualized first in the total structure of the plot, and successively in the relationships and shifts in relationships between the characters, in particular "agons" and in individual choruses. In *Hamlet* a similar action can be discerned and a similar motion traced: from the purpose of discovering the source of Denmark's rottenness to the suffering and the refreshed awareness that quest leads to. But while in *Oedipus* the action was single and concentrated, catching up within it and representatively cleansing by means of it the life of the whole city and the life of "nature sacred to the Gods," in *Hamlet* the action is so to speak distributed, and the various characters participate in it by analogy. The action of *Hamlet* is precisely that which the individuals—Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius, Laertes, the women, the foreign invaders—variously and analogously pursue; the action is "realized"—as *being* itself is realized in the metaphysic assumed—in a plurality of human personalities. Each of them has his or her conviction about rottenness and health, and the steps necessary to purge the one or maintain the other; each suffers and sees; and Hamlet, though he suffers more and sees more than any other member of the kingdom, is at the center only as participating more fully: not, like Oedipus, as being the source, the secret, and the fulfillment of the action himself. Such dramatic distribution is a kind of realism: it is the way we think things *really* happen. Mr. Fergusson suggests that the power of *Hamlet*, and perhaps its ultimate superiority, is achieved in the juxtaposition of this amount of realism with the remnants of social and religious rituals; for the ritualistic and the realistic vibrate endlessly in ironic counter-commentaries on each other.

Shakespeare's achievement was made possible, Mr. Fergusson argues, by the existing Elizabethan theater; and that, in turn, by the oddly interrelated disparities of Elizabethan society and culture. The elements held in balance (and in a balance which the theater could, and was expected to, "mirror") became dissociated thereafter, and the ground was prepared for a series of great dramatic heresies. In Racine's *Bérénice*, for example, Mr. Fergusson detects mere "purpose" being merely demonstrated; in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, mere "passion" being merely obeyed. Reason dictates attitude, decision, and the very rhythms of speech in *Bérénice*; passion overwhelms the characters and hurries the language of *Tristan*. Racine addressed the limited awareness of a limited group in France; Wagner "'addressed the true' life and spirit of the German *volk*"; neither was able or eager to reflect in his stories the moral urgings in the "body" of their times. Both heresies, both exploitations of partial perspectives, are the product

of the dislocation of cultures, the decentralization of theaters. Ibsen recovered a fragment of lost ground by pressing the conventions of bourgeois realism to the point where the soul's quest could almost be sensed in the ill-lit parlor; but his plots were more often at odds with the action he perceived.

As he approaches the period we now live in, Mr. Fergusson may be accused (he has already been accused) of lack of sympathy, of applying his classical and traditional measures too severely, of being discontent with our creative abundance. The charge would be only another way of saying that Mr. Fergusson does have a sustained opinion, and has not descended to the limp contemporary relativism that yields when confronted by whatever tawdry phenomenon; but the charge may also serve to illuminate the complexity of Mr. Fergusson's undertaking. It must already be evident that the task is thick with its own paradoxes, like the quest for the idea of virtue in *The Meno*. That conversation almost failed to come off, and one of the surprises of Mr. Fergusson's book is that it ever got written; it has the air of barely arriving; we apprehend the torpedo-fish at every turn. The difficulty beneath the obvious difficulty (which is, how to communicate an idea in language which has grown thin in the repudiation of that idea) may be hinted at by the following. The action Mr. Fergusson sees dramatized greatly by Sophocles and sketchily by Ibsen might, of course, be contemplated within the vocabulary of theology, where it could be detected in its intimacy with the process of "salvation." Mr. Fergusson confesses in an appendix that theological questions "bristle" about his subject. But it is perhaps an action which falls just short of salvation—which falls within the area where literature is more at home: the area, not of the *Paradiso* of Dante, but of the *Purgatorio*: "quel secondo regno, dove l'umano spirito si purga."[1] Mr. Fergusson wants to look at it there anyhow (as a critic of literature), and Dante in the *Purgatorio* keeps pace with the discussion as the supreme model of the manifold experience in question.

Dante is a key figure here, but he remains muffled; Mr. Fergusson wants to assume him, for purposes of reference. His presence suggests inevitably that, while Mr. Fergusson sticks to actual plays (apart from the furtive allusions to Dante); and while he does not pose his questions or defend their centrality by theology; his argument nonetheless may be best understood and felt with the greatest force by means of a running analogy to the terms of theology—and that, to a theology not just now widely acceptable, however fashionable certain of its formulae. One might more readily recognize the basic action and more quickly agree that it is the stuff of drama, under all conditions: if that action were analogized to the behavior of the soul when, prodded by an initial gift of grace, it prepares itself purgatorially for the possible infusion of "saving" grace. More importantly: the situation in which drama has the best chance seems to be that cultural situation in which the world of nature and the world

[1] "That second kingdom, where the human spirit purges itself."

beyond it (of the gods, of God, of grace, of charity) are taken to be in harmony and, in a ticklish sense of the word, continuous with each other. This *was* true of Sophoclean Athens—it is what we mean by "ritual expectancy"; and it was a good deal truer of the theocentric humanism of thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Italy. In the sixteenth century—earlier in France and Germany, later in England—the two worlds were wobbling towards discord, and this drift was precisely what Shakespeare could seize upon. Today, in the culmination of a history, the two worlds are either wholly blocked off from each other, or frozen into implacable hostility.

This is the great and terrible circumstance that, among other things, measures the vacuity of most of our dramatic offerings, measures the accomplishment of Cocteau in *The Infernal Machine*, and the relative failure of Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Mr. Fergusson does not quite say so, but he lets us infer that Eliot's failure (a failure in which many radiant but transitory moments of success are imbedded) may be laid to his theology. Eliot posits an order of charity, but he seems to say that the only way to get to it is by repudiating the order of nature; and however we judge the theology, it is not going to realize itself satisfactorily in the theater, for there is no communication, no action shared among the characters. Cocteau, on the other hand, wanted, as Mr. Fergusson says, "an art which should subsist side by side with the common sense of life instead of denying and utterly replacing it . . . Accordingly he finds, behind the meaningless but intelligible machinery of contemporary careers and pleasures"—the life of the modern city—"the less intelligible but more significant machinery of the mythic 'gods'." Cocteau's is an ideal for drama based upon an ambition for experience, which in turn reflects the most fruitful adjustment of nature and grace: a relationship whereby grace does not destroy nature but perfects it. Cocteau knows that relationship scarcely obtains today; what he dramatizes is the pain and the hope of renewing it. For this is the real and fundamental maladjustment of our epoch; and in whatever pair of opposed but relatable terms we put it, it comprises the agony of the individual and the raw material of the agon of the dramatic hero.

Mr. Fergusson avoids talking in the language of "nature and grace"; we might say that he allows Dante to do that part of the talking for him. It is good to report that Mr. Fergusson is preparing a book about the *Purgatorio*—a book we may expect to be the volume prior to *The Idea of a Theater*. Meanwhile, in Mr. Fergusson's success in getting by these difficulties, we have a striking example of the discharge of that responsibility that literary critics have more or less anxiously assumed over the past two decades in the United States. It is a responsibility akin to that of the biblical commentators in the early Middle Ages; and it is made anxious by the fact that while it needs to examine matters which customarily depend upon a preliminary theological inquiry, it can no longer count on that inquiry having occurred or being acceptable. The problem of the critic

today is linked to that of the creative writer. One of Mr. Fergusson's colleagues once remarked that Eliot had to put his religion into his poetry along with his experience of it; and the critic —one as distinguished as Mr. Fergusson, anyhow—has to put his theology into his criticism (or pretend to, or put it in an appendix, or leave it hanging about the back door) along with the analogies he wants to draw from it. Before computing his sum, the critic has to think of a number, and then, later, make sure he takes away the number he thought of first: the absence of that number is what he wants to demonstrate. The anxiety, for the American critic, doubles on itself, since the theology in question is so little extricable from the European tradition he only problematically shares and which, moreover, is not wholly able to recognize itself and reanimate itself in its own home. These paradoxes, these difficulties, these anxieties are some of the present cultural circumstances which Mr. Fergusson confronts; his solutions are great ones, as great as they are likely to permit.

—*R. W. B. Lewis*

*The Iliad of Homer*

TRANSLATED BY RICHMOND LATTIMORE.

Chicago, 1951, University of Chicago Press, $4.50.

In the last few years new translations of Homer have been coming from the presses of the English-speaking world:

as storms of snow descend to
the ground incessant
on a winter day, when Zeus of the counsels, showing
before men what shafts he possesses brings on a snowstorm
and stills the winds asleep in the solid drift, enshrouding
the peaks that tower among the mountains and the shoulders out-jutting,
and the low lands with their grasses, and the prospering work of men's hands,
and the drift falls along the grey sea, the harbours and beaches,
and the surf that breaks against it is stilled, and all things elsewhere
it shrouds from above, with the burden of Zeus' rain heavy upon it.

The insistence of this challenge to translators and the existence of a sizable reading public who buy these translations deserve some attention as a part of the American scene. Long ago the Homer who was read and enjoyed by several generations of English readers in the versions of Chapman and Pope was stolen from the general public by "scientific" researchers and has only begun to escape from their learned clutches in the last twenty-five years. To understand what Lattimore is presenting to the reader of today one must realize the significance of what has been going on in the libraries and in the studies of classical scholars. One must likewise look at the text of the *Iliad*, Homeric scholarship, and try to get some sense of the needs and interests of the present-day reader.

Although we can be reasonably sure that no very startling changes have been made in the *Iliad* for the last two thousand five hundred years, readers and translators of the text have for the past two centuries found quite different poems before them because of the preconceptions with which they approached the Greek text.

If Pope felt the need to "improve and elevate" Homer because of the eighteenth-century feeling about his vulgarisms and crudities, the nineteenth century of Lang, Leaf, and Myers could create an artificial style and tone by a prose dialect that was in accord with, if not influenced by, the theory of Matthew Arnold about Homer's "poetic" dialect. While earnest translators were refining into fool's gold or bequaintifying into King James Gibberish, generations of sober scholars were athetizing each book, each line, to produce an Ur-Ilias to order for each individual taste. All in all, the incompatibility of the scholar and the interpreter produced separation if not divorce absolute.

Blessedly some sensitive readers did read the *Iliad* with enjoyment, without being distracted by scholarly exegesis, grammatical, structural, archaeological, dialectical, or by the inevitable limitations of translation. The separation between scholarship, translation, and the enjoyment of literature seems at last to be coming to an end. Lattimore's translation, the product of poet and scholar, is near to proof that this is possible.

One of the affectations of scholarship has been to deny any value to the translation either as a product of scholarship or as a part of literature, but this, of course, is simply not true. Witness North's *Plutarch*, Golding's *Ovid*, or the King James version of the Bible. Even the Romans had their Latin translations of Homer. The really difficult question is not whether there shall be translations, but what kind of translations shall there be, and who shall make them. As I have already indicated, from the end of the seventeenth century until the beginning of the twentieth a great deal of the translating was done by eager amateurs (or poorly paid hacks) while the professors looked down their noses at such paltry performances. Consequently much that could and should have been known from the work of scholars was unknown to the translator who did what he could to make the classics available to the general public. Jowett and Gilbert Murray were among the first scholars with some sense of literary form who felt a wider responsibility and sought to reconcile knowledge and the problem of interpreting to a larger audience. Subsequently the Loeb Classical Library helped to make translating respectable by calling on authorities to undertake volumes in the series.

The scholar in the role of translator may solve one problem of interpretation—that of accuracy—but there is no assurance that the product will be English, especially in the United States where so little stress is laid on style in scholarly writing. It is hard to find good translations in prose. But if the translation is to be in verse, Heaven help us. Poets and versifiers are separated by a wider gulf than scholars and genuine translators. Dryden and Pope were poets; the English reader of their days could be grateful when interest or necessity led them to produce versions of the classics. But in general the contemporary verse translator is no longer the poet learning or plying his trade, and will seldom try anything ambitious. Usually the model which he selects is painfully uninteresting both in metrical form and in choice of diction. And yet I believe that the verse translation of

Greek poetry should and can have qualities essential to the reinterpretation of the original which are not possible in a prose translation.

In the first place poetic form enforces consideration of the value of the word and phrase by the translator. Lattimore is completely aware of this when he says: "I must try to avoid mistranslation, which would be caused by rating the word of my choice ahead of the word which translates the Greek." The obligation of re-presenting the original poem is present in prose, but it is easier to slur over. In the second place the verse translation requires a sense of the structure of the whole and a feeling for the relationship of the parts which in turn will act as a brake on the current mania for rapid reading "to get the plot" and "for comprehension." Such reading indeed has its place, but among students the emphasis on tests and quantitative measurements tends to obscure the possibility of enjoying literature for its own sake. Corrective measures can be taken in prose but we have few Faulkners to do it.

This interpretation of the *Iliad* rests on a sensitive understanding of the Greek text, but as the introduction shows, Lattimore has a thorough knowledge of Homeric studies and the courage to cut through everything which does not aid in the interpretation of the poem. He sees the *Iliad* which he is translating as the tragedy of Achilleus, not a chronicle, not a treasury of myth and history, but a tragedy with a beginning, middle, and end. Whatever may be the origins of the story of Troy, whatever the archaeological, historical, and literary antecedents may have been, this is the work of art. Although the scale permits the introduction of many incidents not directly tied to the wrath of Achilleus, the *Iliad* as we have it is classical in form and episodes may be incorporated only if they do not interfere. The wrath of Achilleus is central.

Lattimore has, I believe, found a remarkably satisfactory solution for the problems of diction and poetic form. He has scrupulously avoided "noble" language, and as he says, "used the plainest language I could find which might be adequate, and mostly this is the language of contemporary prose." So the reader is saved from the excesses and stilted artificialities of a pseudo-poetic diction which was long retained by translators when poets had abandoned it.

However, his translation is not prose. Lattimore has hit upon a free six-beat line which is to be read with its natural stress and not forced into any system. It is not, as he says, based on any theory, and at times the reader may be a bit puzzled if he tries to analyze the metrical pattern. The real achievement is a verse form which carries the reader along with something of the speed and rhythm of the Greek and does not often block him with artificial retards and the sense of padded lines. While it is true that sometimes grammatical inversions in the lines are hindrances, "the achieve of the thing" is a version which uses diction agreeable to current taste and reinforces it with rhythm and poetic tension not to be found in the best of the prose versions. The words of Sarpedon to Glaukos in the Twelfth Book will illustrate:

Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle,
would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,
so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost
nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.
But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us
in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them,
let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others.

Or again the words of Achilleus to Priam:

Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals,
that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows.
There are two urns that stand on the door-sill of Zeus. They are unlike
for the gifts they bestow: an urn of evils, an urn of blessings.
If Zeus who delights in thunder mingles these and bestows them
on man, he shifts, and moves now in evil, again in good fortune.
But when Zeus bestows from the urn of sorrows, he makes a failure
of man, and the evil hunger drives him over the shining
earth, and he wanders respected neither of gods nor mortals.

One more passage may serve to give some indication of the tone of the translation, the scene of Hektor, Andromache, and Astyanax in the Sixth Book:

So speaking glorious Hektor held out his arms to his baby,
who shrank back to his fair-girdled nurse's bosom
screaming, and frightened at the aspect of his own father,
terrified as he saw the bronze and the crest with its horse-hair,
nodding dreadfully, as he thought, from the peak of the helmet.
Then his beloved father laughed out, and his honoured mother,
and at once glorious Hektor lifted from his head the helmet
and laid it in all its shining upon the ground. Then taking
up his dear son he tossed him about in his arms, and kissed him,
and lifted his voice in prayer to Zeus and the other immortals:
"Zeus, and you other immortals, grant that this boy, who is my son,
may be as I am, pre-eminent among the Trojans,
great in strength, as am I, and rule strongly over Ilion;
and some day let them say of him: 'He is better by far than his father,'
as he comes in from the fighting; and let him kill his enemy
and bring home the blooded spoils, and delight the heart of his mother."
So speaking he set his child again in the arms of his beloved
wife, who took him back again to her fragrant bosom
smiling in her tears; and her husband saw, and took pity upon her,
and stroked her with his hand, and called her by name and spoke to her.

An important feature of the handling of any translation of Homer is the way in which Homeric epithets and Homeric similes are treated. Lattimore manages to keep the flavor and the sense of the epithet as an adjunct of the metrical form in English as in the Greek, using "swift-footed," "white-armed," "rosy-fingered" when they are metrically useful but without adopting such devices as Rouse's Apollo Shootafar, Silverbow, Farworker, which tend to become as wearisome as the repeated clauses of Lang, Leaf, and Myers. There is also something to be said for the old "aegis" of Athene as against the modernized "goatskin-tippet" of Rouse.

When we turn to the similes it is possible to form some estimate of Lattimore's achievement and at the same time trace in brief a history of

poetic taste. Let us take one of the similes of the Second Book to show how some of the verse translators of the last four centuries have presented the Homeric simile to the English reader.

First Chapman (1612), and perhaps Keats' reaction to his full-bodied tone was no accident:

and as about the flood
Caïster, in an Asian mead, flocks of the airy brood,
Cranes, geese, or long-necked swans, here, there, proud of their pinions fly,
And in their falls lay out such throats, that with their spiritful cry
The meadow shrieks again; so here, these many-nationed men
Flowed over the Scamandrian field, from tents and ships; the din
Was dreadful that the feet of men and horse beat out of earth;
And in the flourishing mead they stood, thick as the odorous birth
Of flowers, or leaves bred in the spring.

Then Pope (1715), as always, a treasure house of elegance:

Not less their number than th' embodied cranes,
Or milk-white swans in Asius' wat'ry plains,
That o'er the windings of Caÿster's springs
Stretch their long necks, and clap their rustling wings,
Now tower aloft, and course in airy rounds;
Now light with noise; with noise the field resounds.
Thus numerous and confused, extending wide,
The legions crowd Scamander's flow'ry side;
With rushing troops the plains are cover'd o'er,
And thund'ring footsteps shake the sounding shore;
Along the river's level meads they stand,
Thick as in spring the flowers adorn the land,
Or leaves the trees.

William Cullen Bryant (1870), though unable to sustain the tone, managed a simple and direct recreation:

And as when water-fowl of many tribes—
Geese, cranes, and long-necked swans
—disport themselves
In Asia's fields beside Caÿster's streams,
And to and fro they fly with screams, and light,
Flock after flock, and all the fields resound;
So poured, from ships and tents, the swarming tribes
Into Scamander's plain, where fearfully
Earth echoed to the tramp of steeds and men;
And there they mustered on the river's side,
Numberless as the flowers and leaves of spring.

Smith and Miller (1944) adopted the idea of a line-for-line translation suggested by the German translation of Voss (1793). The product is a monumental display of the wrong way to translate Homer:

Even as tribes full many of feathered fowl of the heavens
(Cranes it may be, or of long-necked swans, or of wild geese haply)
There on the Asian mead, by the stream of Caÿstrus river,
Hither and thither are flutt'ring with pinions joyously flapping,
Settling with loud cries ever afore, and the meadow resoundeth:
So from the barracks and galleys the tribes, full many in number,
Poured forth over the plain of Scamander; the earth underneath them
Terribly echoed beneath their feet and the feet of the horses.
Now in the mead of Scamander, a-blooming with flowers, they halted
Numberless, many as blossoms and leaves that come forth in the springtime.

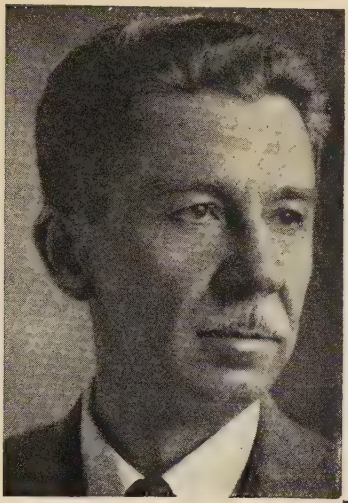
And finally Lattimore (1951) attempts a "natural" poetic tone:

These, as the multitudinous nations of birds winged,
of geese, and of cranes, and of swans long-throated
in the Asian meadow beside the Kaÿstrian waters
this way and that way make their flights in the pride of their wings, then

settle in clashing swarms and the whole
meadow echoes with them,
so of these the multitudinous tribes from
the ships and
shelters poured to the plain of Skamandros,
and the earth beneath their
feet and under the feet of their horses
thundered horribly.
They took position in the blossoming
meadow of Skamandros,
thousands of them, as leaves and flowers
appear in their season.

It is clear that a mere matter of date in relation to the present is no guarantee that the translation will appeal to present readers in terms of poetic quality or modernity. I believe that Lattimore's gifts of taste, poetic insight, and scholarly knowledge have given English readers a chance to enjoy and appreciate Homer to a degree that has not been possible for a long time. One may always say that only in the Greek can the *Iliad* be fully appreciated but any reader of this translation will leave it with his personal and literary experience enhanced.

—*Francis R. B. Godolphin*



FRANCIS FERGUSSON
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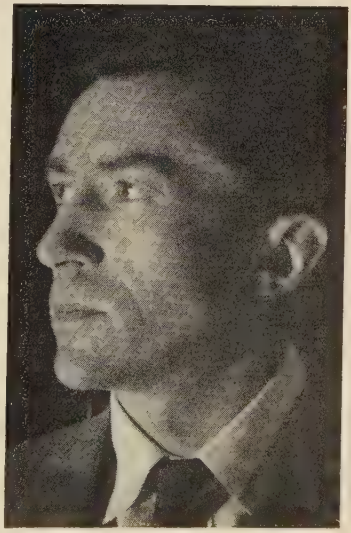
R. P. BLACKMUR
*Alan W. Richards*

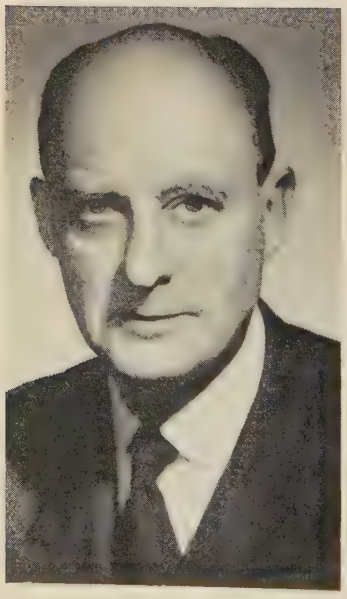
EDWARD T. CONE
*Laurie Vance Johnson*



HYMAN BLOOM
*Bober-Cambridge*

ALLEN TATE
*Hans Namuth*

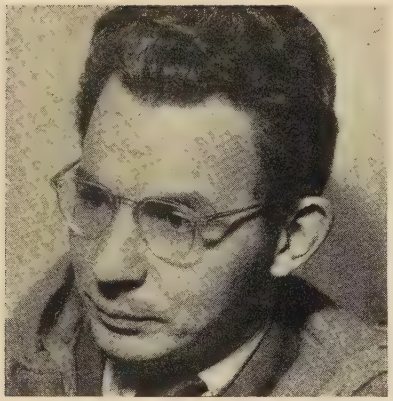
SYDNEY FREEDBERG
*Bober-Cambridge*



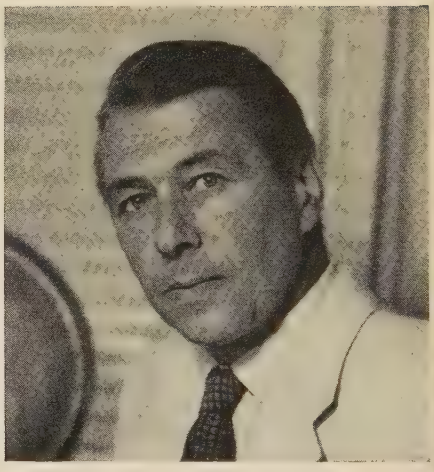
REINHOLD NIEBUHR
*Fabian Bachrach*

IRVING HOWE

WILLIAM TROY

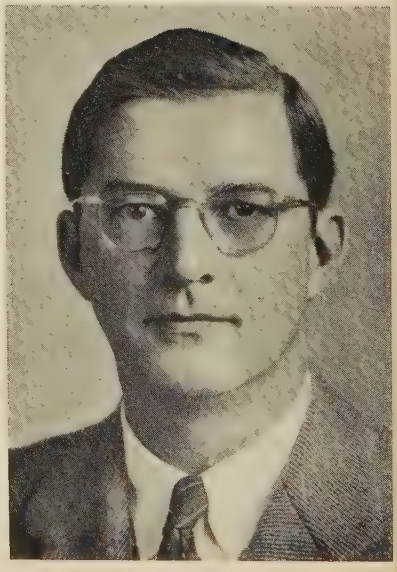


R. W. B. LEWIS



HERBERT GOLD

HERBERT BAYER



FRANCIS R. B. GODOLPHIN
*Moss*

## NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

HERBERT BAYER, the cover artist for this issue of *Perspectives*, who was born in Haag, Austria, in 1900, began his typographic work when he was a student at the Bauhaus under Kandinsky. Today his work in design covers all fields—typography, interiors, exhibitions, advertising, architecture, etc. He is also active as a painter, especially as a muralist, and his recent work can be seen in the Commons Building of the Graduate Center at Harvard University and the Aspen Institute Building at Aspen, Colorado. He has had many one-man shows in Europe and the United States . . . Mr. Bayer's design for the cover of this issue of *Perspectives* is a good example of his theory that art must be in motion. He believes that energies must be gathered and dispersed in patterns of movement which create an interplay between painting and spectator designed to exact from the spectator an instantaneous insight of space and time.

R. P. BLACKMUR, the editor of this issue, is completing a study of Dostoevski which will be published this year. Blackmur's previously published works include a collection of his critical essays, *Language As Gesture* (1952), and three volumes of poetry: *From Jordan's Delight* (1937), *The Second World* (1942), and *The Good European* (1947). Both his poetry and his criticism evince the toughness of an essentially metaphysical outlook, and in his criticism he has been especially concerned with the qualities of language that make it both malleable to the individual artist's personality and resilient to the demands of an idea—he has, in other words, looked at language as the medium in which gesture and

symbol intercept madness and incommunicability. Among his most notable essays are those on Wallace Stevens, Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, and the poetry of Marianne Moore . . . Blackmur has just returned from a year in Europe and the Middle East where, among other things, he was at work on a study of Henry James' life and writing. He is Professor of English at Princeton University.

Composer, teacher, and critic of music, E. T. CONE, who is at present at work on his first symphony, is the author of many compositions of choral and chamber music. Among his most important compositions are: "The Lotus Eaters," "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," and "Excursions." He was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1917. Upon his graduation from Princeton University in 1939 he joined the faculty of that university, and he is now Associate Professor of Music.

*The Idea of a Theater* (1949), by FRANCIS FERGUSSON, is by common assent the best recent book on the drama published in the United States. From a close analysis of the dramatic methods of Sophocles, Ibsen, Wagner, Pirandello, Cocteau, and Eliot, Fergusson evolves a definition of the nature of the drama and proposes the conditions necessary to the establishment of a serious, independent theater. In his work, he relies upon his long experience as a working producer, playwright, translator, teacher; Fergusson spent four years in the American Laboratory Theater studying the methods of Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, and he was for twelve years director of the theater at Bennington College . . . Fergusson was born in Chicago in 1904, was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, and is now University Professor of Comparative Literature at Rutgers. In May, 1953, he received an award for work in literature from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. In addition to his work in the theater, he is a scholar of comparative literature, and author of *Dante's Drama of the Mind: A Modern Reading of the Purgatorio* (1953).

Though he is perhaps best known in the United States for his criticism of contemporary American painting, SYDNEY FREEDBERG is at the same time a teacher and scholar of art history; in fact, he contends that contemporary art criticism can only be performed by the critic with sound training in historical scholarship. Freedberg has specialized in Italian painting of the sixteenth century, especially the work of Parmigianino, and in nineteenth-century and modern painting . . . Freedberg, who is a professor in the Department of Art at Wellesley College, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1914 and graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard University in 1936. During the present Winter, 1954 session he is Visiting Lecturer in the Harvard University Department of Art. Much of his critical writing has appeared in *Art News*, and he was for a time on the editorial staff of that magazine. He is the author of *Parmigianino: His Works in Painting* (1950) [Oxford].

FRANCIS R. B. GODOLPHIN's translations from Latin lyric poetry and Greek drama have earned him a wide and enviable reputation among readers in the United States. His work has placed him with those modern classicists who have been particularly concerned to retranslate the literature of antiquity into a viable, contemporary, but more or less permanent idiom and into forms less artificial and less closely identified with the history of English poetry than those used by the nineteenth-century translators. For a number of years he has been Professor of Classic Literature and Dean of the College at Princeton University.

Though one of the youngest published writers in the United States, HERBERT GOLD has achieved a notable success with his short stories and with his first novel, *Birth of a Hero* (1951). He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1924. A graduate of Columbia University, he has spent two years in France as a student of philosophy at the University of Paris, and he is now lecturer in philosophy and literature at Western Reserve University. He is also a member of the Regional Planning Commission of Cuyahoga County, Ohio... Concerning the function of the artist in modern society, Gold has written: "What the writer writes about has to be something which he knows *not* as an artist. Without this causal involvement in some way as a non-artist, the special consciousness of self suspended, he forfeits the possibility of his eye-and-heart's ever having anything important but itself to work on. This self-consciousness alone is important; it is no longer sufficient, nor ever really was." Gold's new novel, *The Prospect Before Us*, will be published in early Spring, 1954.

IRVING HOWE, Associate Professor of English at Brandeis University, is one of the leading critics of the younger generation in the United States, and has published books on Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner, as well as a biography of Walter Reuther, head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. His work combines social and technical analysis with a keen sense of stylistic and formal values. He is at present working on a history of the Communist Party in America.

A frequent contributor to the serious critical and literary journals in the United States, R. W. B. LEWIS is now at work on a full-scale study of American literature, to be entitled *The American Adam*. As the title indicates, Lewis is especially interested in the problem of guilt as a motivating force in American culture and in the rationalizations of American materialism. He is Hodder Fellow at Princeton University and has taught at the Salzburg Seminar for American Studies in Austria.

In his book, *The Irony of American History* (1952), REINHOLD NIEBUHR brings his telling sense of history to bear on the moral predicament of the United States today. The irony derives from the modern situation of a state that avowedly set out two hundred years ago to be "innocent" and to make a "new beginning for man." Today, forced to prove her virtue in a great

power struggle, innocence is impossible, and the risks of ethical conduct are multiplied enormously by possession of the atomic bomb . . . Dr. Niebuhr, America's best-known Protestant theologian, is Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was born in Wright City, Missouri, in 1892; he studied for the ministry at the Divinity School of Yale University. In his most recent book, a collection of essays entitled *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (1953) [Faber], Dr. Niebuhr brings together his criticism of modern liberalism from a Christian viewpoint—particularly such modern projects as world government, which he regards as abstract and illusory. Among the most important of his previous books are *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) and *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941, 1943). Dr. Niebuhr has been perhaps the chief exponent in the United States of a "prophetic" and socially responsible religion; his work is also notable for its effort to adjust the Christian faith to modern social and political problems.

One of the most distinguished poets and critics in the United States, ALLEN TATE has always been associated with the Southern writers; like William Faulkner, he has been concerned to assess and conserve the values of Southern regional and agrarian society. As a poet, he has also been distinguished for his metaphysical preoccupations and his intense feeling for form . . . Tate was born in Kentucky in 1899. He was a member and one of the founders of The Fugitives, a group of young Southern writers who adopted and developed much of the critical theories of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot and who proclaimed a Southern and Jeffersonian political ideal. His first two books, a biography of Stonewall Jackson and *Mr. Pope and Other Poems* were published in 1928. His other books include: *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas* (1936), a novel, *The Fathers* (1938) [Eyre and Spottiswoode], *Reason in Madness* (1941), *The Winter Sea* (1944). In 1948 appeared both his collected poems, *Poems: 1922–1948*, and his collected essays, *On the Limits of Poetry*. Tate was for some years a leading participant in the Invitation to Learning radio program, held the Chair of Poetry at the Library of Congress for a year, edited *The Sewanee Review* for three years and in 1953 was Visiting Lecturer on American Poetry at the University of Rome. Tate, Professor of Literature at the University of Minnesota, was one of the American representatives at the 1952 International Exposition of the Arts in Paris, and a delegate to the UNESCO Conference on the Arts, Venice (September 22–29). His most recent book of criticism is *The Forlorn Demon* (1953).

WILLIAM TROY, though he has written sparingly, has exerted a primary force in American criticism of the present century, especially in the criticism of fiction. A constant advocate of a closer entente between the European tradition and the native American cultural heritage, he has insisted that literature is only valid when it successfully invades a

national personality, when it becomes, in other words, myth. His essays on Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Joyce, Balzac, Stendhal, Proust, Kafka, etc., have often been reprinted, though his first book, to be published next year, will be a translation and critical edition of Baudelaire's prose works. A collection of his essays in book form is promised shortly thereafter . . . Troy was born in Chicago in 1903. He has taught at Bennington College and New York University, and he is at present lecturer in modern literature at The New School for Social Research, New York. Troy was for several years film and fiction critic for *The Nation*. He studied at the University of Grenoble and the Sorbonne, in addition to Yale and Columbia Universities.

## A SELECTIVE LISTING OF NEW BOOKS

*Aiken, Conrad:* COLLECTED POEMS. New York, Oxford University Press, $10.50.

A monumental collection of all the verse which one of the major American poets of this century has chosen to preserve from his earlier volumes. An essay on Aiken's poetry by Henry A. Murray was included in *Perspectives* 5.

*Creekmore, Hubert:* THE CHAIN IN THE HEART. New York, Random House, $3.75.

People who discuss the "Negro problem" in the United States today too seldom realize that its chief aspect is still the actual heritage of slavery, the consciousness of former bondage. In his new novel, Mr. Creekmore, who is also well known as a poet, traces the development from psychological abjectness to a freedom of personality in three generations of a Negro family. The result is an extraordinarily moving story. And not the least of Mr. Creekmore's achievements is his very faithful reproduction in meaningful prose of various Negro dialects.

*Creel, H. G.:* CHINESE THOUGHT: FROM CONFUCIUS TO MAO TSE-TUNG. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, $5.00.

Avowedly written to give the Western layman a closer acquaintance with the Oriental mind, this volume is a non-technical survey of all Chinese philosophy, with special emphasis on the centuries before Christianity came to the East. Professor Creel presents not only lucid expositions of the various philosophical movements—Confucius, Mo Tzu, Mencius, the Taoists, the Legalists, etc.—but also penetrating accounts of the social, political, and religious backgrounds against which they occurred.

*Ferm, Vergilius (editor):* PURITAN SAGE: COLLECTED WRITINGS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS. New York, Library Publishers, $7.50.

A new one-volume edition of the principal writings of the American eighteenth-century theologian, philosopher, scientist, and educator, including some hitherto unpublished material.

*Geismar, Maxwell:* REBELS AND ANCESTORS. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, $4.50.

*Rebels and Ancestors*, which treats of the period 1890–1915, is the third volume to appear in Mr. Geismar's five-volume study of *The Novel in America*. Its principal chapters are devoted to the work of Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Ellen Glasgow, and Theodore Dreiser.

*Helm, MacKinley:* MAN OF FIRE: J. C. OROZCO. New York, Harcourt, Brace, $7.50.

This is the first full-length study of one of the greatest Mexican painters of the twentieth century. The author combines biography, interpretation, and formal analysis in dealing with Orozco's development as a painter and in discussing the numerous works reproduced in this volume.

*Hoffman, Frederick J. and Moore, Harry T. (editors):* THE ACHIEVEMENT OF D. H. LAWRENCE. Norman, Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, $4.00.

A symposium-anthology in which a number of writers evaluate many different aspects of Lawrence's work. The essayists include: Edmund Wilson, T. S. Eliot, James Thurber, Aldous Huxley, Sigrid Undset, F. R. Leavis, Mark Schorer, Anthony West, and others.

*Hutchins, Robert M.:* THE CONFLICT IN EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. New York, Harper's, $2.00.

A pungent analysis by the former Chancellor of The University of Chicago of what is wrong with American education today and a statement of what Dr. Hutchins believes should be done to make liberal education really effective in developing the intellectual power in large masses of citizens necessary for the successful practice of democracy.

*Jarrell, Randall:* POETRY AND THE AGE. New York, Knopf, $4.00.

Detailed studies of important American poets and the place of poetry in the contemporary world. The author, best known as a poet, is one of the most gifted modern critics of poetry. Among the poets examined are Whitman, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, John Crowe Ransom, Walter de la Mare, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, and William Carlos Williams. Of particular significance are the two essays which justify the title of the book, "The Obscurity of the Poet," and "The Age of Criticism."

*Miner, Horace:* THE PRIMITIVE CITY OF TIMBUCTOO. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, $5.00.

Professor Miner chose Timbuctoo as his subject of study because, while it is

distinctly an urban culture, it has resisted more successfully than any other primitive city the impact of Western industrialism, capitalism, and the sweep of democratic ethos. The evidence he collected indicates that urbanization as such, even though it proceeds outside the pale of our particular civilization, is destructive of folk values; the citizens of Timbuctoo live predominantly in a society that is disorganized, secular, and impersonal.

*Murphy, Gardner:* IN THE MINDS OF MEN. New York, Basic Books, $4.50.

In 1949, the Government of India asked UNESCO to make available a consultant who could organize research teams of Indian social scientists and psychologists and direct an investigation of "social tensions" in the newly independent country. Gardner Murphy, Director of Research at The Menninger Foundation, was given the job. This is his informal report, based on a mass of technical documents, of the ways in which the basic Hindu-Moslem conflict has created a general hysteria in the minds of millions of Indians—a hysteria which has spread to hundreds of unrelated and sometimes purely imaginary dissensions.

*O'Brien, Justin:* PORTRAIT OF ANDRÉ GIDE. New York, Knopf, $6.00.

A biography of Gide and a critical estimate of his whole life's work by the Columbia University professor who made the English translation of Gide's *Journals*. Mr. O'Brien has grouped his discussion of Gide's ideas under headings suggested by the classical myths which so deeply preoccupied him—Oedipus, Theseus, Prometheus, Corydon, Icarus, etc.

*Pound, Ezra:* THE TRANSLATIONS OF EZRA POUND. Norfolk, Connecticut, New Directions, $6.00.

This volume contains most of the verse translations of the poet who is unquestionably the greatest translator of the century. Included are Pound's versions of Guido Cavalcanti, Arnaut Daniel, Chinese poetry, and certain Japanese *Noh* plays which have been available only in limited editions or have been out of print for some time.

*Radin, Paul:* THE WORLD OF PRIMITIVE MAN. New York, Henry Schuman, $5.00.

Professor Radin has for many years been a champion of the theory that primitive man must be studied, not only as a victim of fear, magic, and ritual, but also as a rational man, an objective thinker. This volume presents a survey of all of Professor Radin's work—his lifelong study of primitive civilizations in terms of their legal, economic, and philosophical systems.

*Radin, Paul and Sweeney, James Johnson:* AFRICAN FOLK TALES AND SCULPTURE. New York, Pantheon Press, $8.50.

This volume offers a representative collection of native African myths and folk tales accompanied by more than 160

photographs of related examples of the plastic arts. The folk tales have been transcribed from the unwritten literatures of the West-African tribes, the Bantu-speaking tribes, the tribes of the Nile headwaters, and the Bushmen and Hottentots of South Africa. The photographs are excellent and very well printed. Both Dr. Radin and Mr. Sweeney contribute interesting and useful introductions.

*Ramsey, Warren:* JULES LAFORGUE AND THE IRONIC INHERITANCE. New York, Oxford University Press, $5.00.

This is the first full-length critical work by an American critic of the French poet who has had a great deal of influence on American and Anglo-American poetry, on T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, and others.

*Roethke, Theodore:* THE WAKING. New York, Doubleday, $3.00.

This new collection of verse by one of the most important younger American poets brings back into print some of the best poems from Roethke's early volumes, to which are added examples of his most recent work.

*Shapiro, Karl:* BEYOND CRITICISM. Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, $3.00.

Three essays—"What the Poet Knows," "The True Artificer," and "The Career of the Poem"—in which the Editor of *Poetry* magazine, himself a distinguished poet, analyzes the present state of modern poetry and redefines his own theories of poetic value.

*Stafford, Jean:* CHILDREN ARE BORED ON SUNDAY. New York, Harcourt, Brace, $3.00.

A collection of ten stories by the author of *Boston Adventure*. Miss Stafford is very much an example of the "feminine sensibility," in her stories as in her novels, and the wide range of subject matter gives this new volume a special interest. Here, she probes deeper into the problems of the psyche than she has in previous works, and in some of the stories, she touches on frightening anxieties and depths of feeling.

*Warren, Robert Penn:* BROTHER TO DRAGONS. New York, Random House, $3.50.

In December, 1811, a Negro slave was brutally murdered by two nephews of Thomas Jefferson at a settlement on the Kentucky frontier, a crime in his family which the great idealist was never able to acknowledge. Out of this incident Robert Penn Warren, who is well known for his novels *Night Rider* and *All the King's Men*, has made what he calls "A Tale in Verse and Voices"—that is, a poetic narrative recounted entirely by means of a dialogue among the characters themselves. The result is a powerful and often profound drama of the conflict between social realism and social idealism in a new society.

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## A SELECTIVE LISTING FROM

## AMERICAN PERIODICALS

### THE AMERICAN SCENE

*Faulkner, William:* FAITH OR FEAR. *The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1953.

Faulkner's Commencement Address at the Pine Manor Junior College, delivered last June, when his own daughter was among the graduating class. A stirring appeal to the young generation, in a world that "isn't finished yet. It is not completed to that point where man can put his final signature to the job and say, 'It is finished, we made it, and it works.' Because only men can complete it. Not God, but Men."

*Thompson, Dorothy:* IS THERE A CLIMATE OF FEAR IN AMERICA? *Ladies' Home Journal*, September, 1953.

Miss Thompson takes issue, and vigorously so, with those Europeans and Americans who claim that there is "a climate of fear in America" or that America is "gripped in a wave of anti-Red hysteria." Tracing the character and the history of nonconformism in the States and surveying the rise and development of "Un-American Activities" committees since the late 'thirties, she concludes that "Men are more free in any society than they think themselves to be . . . And the spectacle of Americans, who have never lost a night's sleep through fear of the secret policeman at their door, telling the world that they are 'in the grip of fear' is an unattractive self-description. I would not trust such Americans with my freedom."

## ART

*Crawford, Ralston; Greenberg, Clement; Motherwell, Robert; and Tworkov, Jack:* IS THE FRENCH AVANT-GARDE OVERRATED? A SYMPOSIUM. *Art Digest*, September 15, 1953.

Three American painters and a critic present their opinions about advanced Parisian art and about the phenomenal critical and commercial success which it has enjoyed in the United States. Does the established reputation of French art explain the success of French postcubist artists in the States? Is it a force in the international art world? Does it show any American influence? Who are the outstanding "younger" French artists? Crawford looks up with great deference to Parisian art and the spirit that produces it. Greenberg, on the contrary, is convinced that the Americans are several years ahead; while Motherwell thinks that there are no such things as "French painting" or "American painting" in the twentieth century, and Tworkov concludes that, if there are, there is certainly no competition between them.

*Lansner, Kermit:* GEORGES ROUAULT. *The Kenyon Review*, Summer, 1953.

The recent retrospective exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art of New York inspired this survey of the career of the "greatest religious painter of our time." Mr. Lansner's interpretation differs from those who see in Rouault's work "a long ascent to serenity" or "a voyage from romanticism to classicism." To him the latest paintings seem "to culminate the sense of closure and withdrawal which have always been immanent in Rouault's work; they are the recapitulation of his lifelong themes."

*Read, Herbert:* PRIMITIVE ART AND MODERN MAN. *The New Republic*, September 28, 1953.

"The relations between primitive and modern art are as old as the Eiffel Tower—exactly, for the Eiffel Tower was built to commemorate the Universal Exhibition of 1889, and at that exhibition there were numerous anthropological objects which attracted the attention of the artists of Paris, above all of Gauguin." In this concise essay Sir Herbert traces the origin of primitivism in modern art—which is due "to the artists, not to scholars and scientists, who, in spite of their more intimate knowledge of the material in question, remained obstinately purblind to its aesthetic qualities"; he throws light on the connection between primitive art and the discovery of the unconscious by psychoanalysis, and comes to the conclusion that primitivism in art is a genuine reflection of a return to primitivism—insecurity, *Angst*—in the psychology of modern man.

## ECONOMICS

*Ulmer, Melville J.:* WILL A BALANCED BUDGET RUIN US? *The New Leader*, September 28, 1953.

The Administration's drive against raising the national debt is unnecessary and could lead to a depression. For, the size of the national debt does not in itself represent an important datum for

fiscal or monetary policy or for economic planning in general. In spite of what the author thinks to be an error on the part of the Administration, it is not likely, however, he concludes, that a major depression will materialize this year or next. International tension, with the ensuing outlays for defense, may easily bring a new prosperity, with inflationary characteristics. "But this kind of unemployment insurance is obviously not sufficient, wise, certain, nor socially healthful."

## EDUCATION

*Leavis, F. R.:* THE "GREAT BOOKS" AND A LIBERAL EDUCATION. *Commentary*, September, 1953.

Part of the American faith is that all men must have the opportunity to develop their fullest potentialities and that therefore the values of liberal education, instead of being confined to a limited group as in most countries, should belong to all citizens of a democracy. Some, going further, are convinced that the wide dissemination of liberal education is an absolute necessity if democracy is to survive at all. Out of this belief have come the fifty-four volumes of the "Great Books," published by the Encyclopaedia Britannica under the editorship of Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, which offer to the "common man" the essential content of Western civilization. Mr. Leavis discusses in this article whether the assumptions behind the "Great Books" project are sound and whether, in any case, this list of Great Books or any such list can be taken to embody the core of a liberal education.

## HISTORY

*Hammen, Oscar J.:* THE SPECTRE OF COMMUNISM IN THE 1840's. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, June, 1953.

An analysis of the social, economic, political, cultural situation in the Europe of the 1830's and 1840's, which gave birth to Marxism and explains its rise and its failure.

*McNeil, Gordon H.:* THE ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY ROUSSEAU. *The American Historical Review*, July, 1953.

Mr. McNeil attempts to demonstrate in this carefully documented essay that the stereotype of Rousseau's close causal connection with the French Revolution is open to question in the light of the essentially conservative, antirevolutionary tone of much of his political thought, an aspect of his writing to which considerable publicity was given by conservative writers during the early years of the Revolution.

THE PRESIDENCY. *Current History*, September, 1953.

A symposium on the problems arising in connection with the Presidency of the United States. The establishment of this office under the Constitution; the rise of the party system and its influence on constitutional form; the development of the national nominating convention; "our changing concept of leadership" as reflected in the changed concept of the Electoral College; the controls exercised on the President: these are the main questions, discussed here from the points of view of the historian and the political and social

scientist. The symposium concludes with two articles, probing the possibilities of improving the American system of electing and controlling its chief executive.

## LITERARY CRITICISM

ART AND THE SYMBOLIC. *The Kenyon Review*, Summer, 1953.

The editors of *Kenyon Review* have grouped under the term "symbolic" three independent and highly remarkable essays. Preoccupation with the "symbolic" is their only common denominator.

*Henry David Aiken*, in his essay on Santayana, proceeds from a general presentation of Santayana's work and the difficulties it has to cope with, to a more detailed analysis of his attitudes on aesthetics, reason, and the rational in art. In his field, Santayana "has given us insights . . . which we have barely as yet begun to recover. . . . If he lacked fundamental warmth, this very fact made possible the detachment which was necessary for his probing studies of the controlling symbols of Western culture."

*Richard Ellman's* essay on the art of Yeats dwells on this poet's convictions about reality, truth, life, death, imagination, skepticism, and faith. The essay is documented with large excerpts from Yeats' poetry as well as from his letters and journals.

The third piece of this trilogy is an extensive review article occasioned by the publication of Susanne K. Langer's latest book, *Feeling and Form*.

*Gillis, Everett A.:* DEFINITION IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, July, 1953.

Definition in contemporary poetry consists largely of two phases: (1) the assimilation of the raw data of the modern world into a suitable artistic milieu, which provides a place in the poet's descriptive cross-section of contemporary life for such phenomena as the machine, the skyscraper, the business world; (2) a statement of such data in terms of value. This thesis is tested against the background of the poetry and the speculation of T. S. Eliot, Archibald MacLeish, Karl Shapiro, Hart Crane, Randall Jarrell, and Maxwell Bodenheim, among others.

*Miller, Perry:* MELVILLE AND TRANSCENDENTALISM. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Autumn, 1953.

A critical analysis of the work of Melville, who "had no recourse but to write romances that would destroy romance." The influence of German metaphysical speculation on Melville (and his contemporaries) reflects itself in his opposition of nature and rusticity to the artifice of city life, of the virtuous blonde to the sophisticated and often debauched brunette, of the "foreign" and suspicious to the native American. In *Pierre* and *Moby Dick* "the fundamental terms are not God and man, but Man in Nature. In the vulgar use of the word they are 'tragic,' but in the proper meaning they reject tragedy. They are, to the end, implacably, defiantly, unrepentantly, Transcendental."

## SCIENCE

*Diebold, John:* ATOM AND AUTOMATION: RETOOLING FOR THE NEW ERA. *The Nation*, September 26, 1953.

This is the second of three articles in which the author discusses the scientific bases and social implications of "automation," the automatic factory. Its advent appears to be introducing a new industrial revolution.

## WORLD AFFAIRS

*Bidwell, Percy W.:* HOW STRONG IS THE NEW GERMANY? *The Yale Review*, Summer, 1953.

This is an analysis of the reasons for the spectacular economic recovery achieved by Western Germany in less than seven years. The main factors: Adenauer's liberal economic policy, which stimulated business; the active co-operation of labor organizations with management; the infusion of new entrepreneurial skills and fresh initiative from the East; American aid; the absence of a rearmament program. But the vast problems, economico-political, created by the "partition" remain, while, on the other hand, prompt unification might lead to economic collapse.

*Brinton, Crane:* THE PROSPECTS FOR WESTERN EUROPE. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Autumn, 1953.

One of America's outstanding historians sets down in this essay the impressions gathered during six months of travel in Western Europe. After a judicious and circumspect analysis of the progress achieved towards European Union, of the activities of NATO, of economic integration and of the relations between free enterprise and state control in Europe, Professor Brinton comes to the conclusion that "there is resignation, acceptance . . . in Western Europe, but there is also the lift of courage and hope."

*Kohn, Hans:* IS THE FREE WEST IN DECLINE? HISTORY'S VERDICT IN PERSPECTIVE. *Commentary*, July, 1953.

"The decline of the West" is a theme so harped upon in late years that it is on the way to becoming considered an established truth. Hans Kohn here offers a historian's dissent to this "verdict of history," inviting us to look at the facts in the records, which, he suggests, have been treated cavalierly by professional defeatists. "Far from the West's having passed into its senescence, as all the criers of doom have been telling us, we have good grounds for asserting the conviction that it is only just now entering into the period of its vigorous maturity."

*Pfeffer, Nathaniel:* THE PROSPECT FOR POINT FOUR. *The Virginia Quarterly*, Summer, 1953.

A review of the results of Western technical and economic aid through UNRRA and other agencies in China and elsewhere teaches a twofold lesson: (1) no large-scale aid can be extended without the exercise of some kind of control over investments and expenditures; as, in the past, the lack of such control has resulted in corruption and waste; for support in the exercise of

such control the UN or the United States should appeal, above the heads of selfish dominating groups, to the discontented masses who are to gain from this policy; (2) it would be self-defeating to tie the granting of economic aid to the underdeveloped country's hard and fast promise of support in the fight against Russia. "Point Four must be carried out as a project in world slum clearance and nothing else, taking as our reward eventual increase in trade, more political stability everywhere, and sterilization of the ground for the seeds of Russian Communism. That is reward enough as a matter of fact." The essay concludes with a hopeful report of Point Four achievements in India and a special acknowledgment of the merits of Ambassador Chester Bowles.

*Rossi, Mario:* NEO-FASCISM IN ITALY. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Autumn, 1953.

A survey of the social composition of the "Social Italian Movement," its ideology and program, its history, and its strength and weaknesses.

*Stevenson, Adlai:* THE WORLD I SAW. *Look Magazine*. September 22 1953.

In this article, which concludes a whole series of more detailed reports on his world tour (published in previous issues of *Look*) Stevenson summarizes: "There is no reliable evidence yet that Russia is ready to abandon her goal of world domination; the non-Communist world is by no means a harmonious household and includes every variety of attitudes; there is a growing sentiment in Europe and Asia for meeting the Russians 'half-way' . . . and, finally, faith in American leadership is shaken as confidence declines in America's self-confidence."

*Wright, Gordon:* A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD ALLY: THE STATE OF FRANCE. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer, 1953.

Mr. Wright gives a well-balanced analysis of the French national character, its strength and its weaknesses. He probes the economic, social, and political situation in the light of this analysis, and comes to the conclusion that "such advances as France does make in our times will come gradually, through an evolution so slow that only retrospect will make us clearly aware of them." With luck such progress can be very important: "progress toward greater stability in politics, toward more vigor in economic life, toward a healthier morale. And gains of this sort can mean the survival of one of the few deep-rooted democracies in the twentieth-century world."

## ADDRESSES

*The American Historical Review*, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, New York ($2.00 per copy)

*Art Digest*, 116 East 59th Street, New York 22, New York ($0.50 per copy)

*The Atlantic Monthly*, 8 Arlington Street, Boston 16, Massachusetts ($0.50 per copy)

*Commentary*, 34 West 33rd Street, New York 1, New York ($0.50 per copy)

*Journal of the History of Ideas*, City College, Convent Avenue and 139th Street, New York 31, New York ($1.50 per copy)

*The Kenyon Review*, Gambier, Ohio ($1.00 per copy)

*Ladies Home Journal*, Independence Square, Philadelphia 5, Pennsylvania ($0.35 per copy)

*Look*, 488 Madison Avenue, New York 22, New York ($0.20 per copy)

*The Nation*, 333 Sixth Avenue, New York 14, New York ($0.20 per copy)

*The New Leader*, 7 East 15th Street, New York 3, New York ($0.15 per copy)

*The New Republic*, 1824 Jefferson Place, Washington 6, D.C. ($0.20 per copy)

*The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Duke University Press, Box 6697, College Station, Durham, North Carolina ($0.75 per copy)

*The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 1 West Range, Charlottesville, Virginia ($1.00 per copy)

*The Yale Review*, Drawer 1729, New Haven 7, Connecticut ($1.00 per copy)

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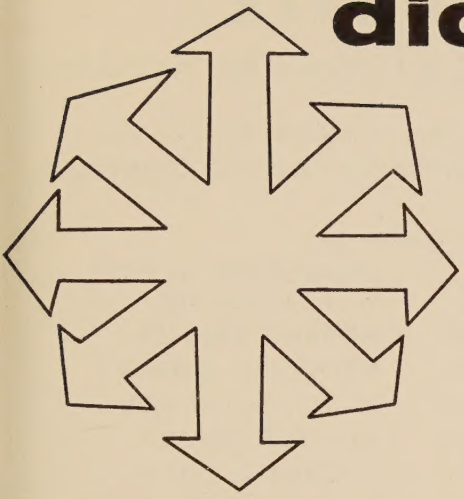

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